

Beautiful: Stories and Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Beauty pageants have been a part of American culture for decades, at some times highly revered and at others harshly criticized. They have inspired both academic analysis and entertainment media in the form of books, essays, reality television shows and fictional movies, along with televised broadcasts and other media. These media representations of beauty pageants and pageant contestants are often more familiar to people than the realities of pageant competition, and exposure to such media can create stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions about beauty pageants that are not representative of the actual experiences of pageant contestants and participants. This project explores several facets of beauty pageant competitions in America, using historical, personal and social perspectives to examine the potential differences between attitudes toward and perceptions of beauty pageants between those who have participated in them and those who have not.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Mary Spillman for acting as my advisor in this project. Her constant support, creative advice and intuitive guidance gave me the resources and confidence I needed to pursue this project over the course of one year, while her experience, insight and energy made her an influential and inspiring mentor throughout my college career.

I would like to thank Chloe Anagnos, Lauren Butler, Karlee Mawhorter and Kayzie Priebe for lending me their time and their stories. They truly are beautiful people beyond just a pretty smile. I would also like to thank Dr. Rachel Kraus, Dr. Katie Lawson and Ashleigh Bingham for offering their academic insights into this topic, and for making me think even harder on every step while developing this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Mary and Harold, for supporting me not only in the creation of this project itself but in all the madness it took to get here – especially all the glitter-laden pageant road trips! – and Ben, for his calming positivity that helped keep me motivated throughout this project.

Table of Contents

Author's Statement.....	1-2
Website Screenshots.....	3-12
"Home" Page.....	3
"Stories" Page.....	4-5
"Perceptions" Page.....	6-11
"About" Page.....	12
 "Competition: Behind the Scenes" Slideshow Content.....	 13-18
"Holding a Title & Wearing the Crown" Audio Slideshow Content.....	19-20
"The History of an Institution" Timeline Content.....	21-26
Journalistic Text Story.....	27-39
Academic Article with Survey Data Analysis.....	40-63
IRB Approval.....	64-65
Bibliography.....	66-68
Creative Project Thesis Checklist.....	69
Bracken Library Form.....	70

Author's Statement

The differences between perceptions and realities have been a constant fascination for me throughout my life. In undertaking this project, I decided to explore one specific topic on which my own perceptions and beliefs were changed by the realities of a personal experience. The striking disparities between my own preconceptions of beauty pageants, which were formed over years of watching televised pageants like the Miss America and Miss Universe competitions as well as reality television shows like "Toddlers and Tiaras" and fictional movies like "Miss Congeniality," and the realities I experienced when I participated in one made me curious about how pageants might be viewed differently depending on personal experience and familiarity with pageants. In order to explore this further, I developed a project in which I could present pageants from a variety of perspectives, aiming to develop a broader context in which individuals could consider their own opinions of and beliefs about beauty pageants in America.

As a journalism and telecommunications major with a minor in sociology, my primary academic focus has been in storytelling: giving audiences the context and facts they need to develop informed opinions and a broader awareness of the world in which they live. In this project, I have chosen to tell the story of beauty pageants from a variety of viewpoints. The project discusses American beauty pageants from a technical perspective, with an explanatory breakdown of how pageant competitions within the Miss America Organization work; an individual perspective, telling the story of one specific pageant contestant and her experiences in competition; a historical perspective, represented in the form of an interactive timeline of the Miss America Organization and pageant; a social and cultural perspective, using a survey to investigate the stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions that people might hold about beauty pageants and contestants and comparing these beliefs between individuals who have and have not participated in them; an academic perspective, gathering input and background from those in the fields of psychology, sociology, and women's and gender studies; and a personal perspective, discussing not only my own experiences but also the experiences and beliefs of other individuals in relation to beauty pageants. Using each of these elements, the project aims to create a complete picture of beauty pageants within modern American culture, placing them in a variety of contexts and allowing audiences to consider them in new ways.

I chose to present the majority of these elements in the form of a website in order to utilize the journalistic storytelling skills acquired in courses in my major. By using a number of multimedia and interactive components, I was able to present the information I had gathered in ways specifically suited to the subject matter. Especially when presenting personal stories, the use of visual and audio storytelling techniques helps audiences better relate to the individuals whose stories they are hearing, seeing or reading. Along with the multimedia elements, I chose to include a long-form, journalistic text story to discuss the personal, social and cultural elements of the topic. This decision was based on my previous academic experience in my major, in which I've spent significant time developing effective writing skills that can present a complicated issue in a compelling way. In addition to the website content, I also developed an academic style paper discussing the survey data I gathered. This allowed me to use the

analytical skills I've developed in my sociology minor to explore the topic of beauty pageants in a broader societal and cultural context.

The process for developing all of the elements of this project really began before the project itself, when my own curiosity drove me to enter a beauty pageant competition. After this experience, I was inspired to pursue the topic of beauty pageants academically as well as personally. The initial phases of this thesis project involved research into existing academic works that examine beauty pageants. I conducted research on the history and structure of beauty pageants within American culture, media representations of pageants in America, and on common perceptions, beliefs, stereotypes and expectations about beauty pageants and pageant contestants in American culture. From this research I developed a survey that aimed to explore some of the perceptions and beliefs that individuals might hold about beauty pageants and contestants, and especially how these beliefs might differ with individuals' varying levels of familiarity with or participation in actual beauty pageants. Along with the survey, I also conducted a number of interviews with academics in the fields of the psychology and sociology of women and in women's and gender studies, as well as with women who had personally competed and participated in beauty pageants.

Once this information was gathered, I had to determine not only what information was most vital to share, but also what the best methods of telling those stories would be. In order to fully explore the results of the survey, I decided to separate the bulk of the data analysis into its own task, which became the academic paper component of the thesis. I then considered the rest of the information I had gathered from my research and interviews and divided it into several smaller categories, each of which turned into one component of the site: a main text story discussing both perceptions and realities of beauty pageants and contestants, informational graphics visually displaying some common trends from the survey data, a chronological description of how competitions in the Miss America Organization work, an audio slideshow describing the experiences of one specific pageant contestant, and an interactive timeline of the history of the Miss America Organization in America.

This project allowed me to explore a single topic more deeply than I ever had before, using both my sociological and journalistic backgrounds to research and report on perceptions and realities of beauty pageants in modern American culture. By putting significant time and research into one single topic, I was able to more clearly understand, develop and present a wide variety of perspectives on the subject. Rather than focusing on only one angle of the story, I was able to explore many sides of it and to develop a deeper understanding of the variety of factors at play in what beauty pageants are and mean to a variety of people. This type of deep-level storytelling forced me to use both my analytical and creative skills in new ways in order to not only grasp the information I gathered in ways that were meaningful to me, but also to present that information in ways that would be meaningful, informational and interesting to audiences.

Beautiful: Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

Website URL: <http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful>

The main product of this project is a website, which can be accessed at the URL above. This and the following binder pages include screenshots from the website as it appears online. Separate documents with the full text content of the interactive slideshow and timeline on the "Stories" page and of the journalistic story on the "Perceptions" page are included in the binder as well, along with a DVD of the audio slideshow from the "Stories" page.

"Home" page (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful>)

BEAUTIFUL

Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

HOME STORIES PERCEPTIONS ABOUT

Beauty pageants have been a part of American society and culture for decades. They appear in live televised broadcasts, fictionalized movies and dramatized reality TV shows. Pageant contestants and winners can be seen at high-profile events and in viral internet videos, at times heralded as role models and at others mocked as ignorant airheads. Throughout their history in America, they have stirred up controversy and raised questions about femininity, culture and what it means to be beautiful.

This project aims to explore beauty pageants in a variety of contexts - historical, social, and personal. It examines both the perceptions that people hold about beauty pageants and pageant contestants as well as the realities and experiences of the women who compete in them, considering the question:

What does it mean to be a "beauty queen?"




PHOTO CREDIT: ABC Photography

HOME STORIES PERCEPTIONS ABOUT

BEAUTIFUL

Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

STORIES

What is it like to be a “pageant girl”?

Competition: Behind the Scenes

It takes more than a winning smile to become Miss America, and the competition doesn't begin on the night of the final pageant. Every year, thousands of young women across the U.S. vie for the chance to represent their communities and compete for the opportunity to be their state's titleholder at the Miss America competition in September. Although less public and glamorous than the national pageant, these local competitions are the backbone of the Miss America Organization. Here's a look behind the scenes at what it takes to get to Miss America.

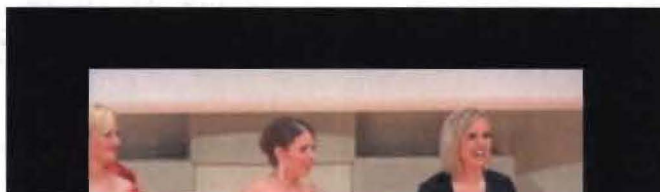
The Local Pageant 7:30 a.m. – Check-in

Contestants check into the venue. Many local competitions are held in high school auditoriums or small community theaters, and contestants often have little space to organize their dress racks laden with heavy garment bags, suitcases full of shoes and accessories, and backpacks full of homework to fill the time backstage. While some venues have full dressing rooms, others may have only a blocked-off hallway where contestants will spend the day and prepare for the competition.



Holding a Title & Wearing the Crown

Chloe Anagnos has been competing in pageants since she was 14 years old. She has held numerous titles in the Miss America Organization, and has competed in both the Miss Indiana's Outstanding Teen and Miss Indiana Pageants. For Anagnos, pageants are about more than rhinestones and roses.



“Stories” page – bottom (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>)



The History of an Institution

The Miss America Organization has changed significantly from its inception in 1921 to become the competition and spectacle it is today. Here are some highlights of the moments that have helped to shape the Miss America Pageant over the past century.

Getting to Miss America

From bathing beauties in seaside shows through searing scandals and prominent protests to a legacy of style, service, scholarships and success: the history of the Miss America Organization and pageant.



HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

[HOME](#)

STORIES





ABOUT

How do people view pageants and contestants?

September evening, a tradition begins. In Atlantic City, 52 young women put the final touches

Every year, thousands of young women vie for the title of Miss America, competing in local pageants around the country. There must be something more than a crown and sash that keeps beauty pageants alive. After attending the 2003 Miss Ball State University pageant as an audience member and getting a brief glimpse of what goes into becoming Miss America, I decided to dive into the shimmering world of beauty pageants to see what these competitions are really like. I read, I researched, and - to get a personal perspective - I competed. The realities, stories and experiences I discovered were much different than the glittery, giddy world I expected. There is more to beauty pageants than many people realize.

More modern changes to the Miss America Organization have added a new focus of philanthropy and community service to the

	Negative connotation implying brutality, persecution or condemnation
	Negative connotation implying egotism or vanity
	Negative connotation implying tension
	Negative connotation implying ignorance, naïveté or causing unintentional harm
	General negative connotation
	Positive connotation implying hard work



Above: Responses to the prompt, "Describe your opinion of beauty pageants in one word."



Miss America's reign became known as the Year of Service. Titleholders now use this year to travel the country promoting the organization's national platform, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, as well as a personal platform based on a specific charity, or a health or social issue chosen by the contestant.

Now pageants in the Miss America organization incorporate elements of both the past and the present. The swimwear and evening gown components are still required parts of the competition, but so are the talent, interview and on-stage question portions. While contestants do dress up in glitter and makeup, they are also required to have a personal platform that they support through community service or fundraising. Contestants list academic achievements on their applications and study up on current events while also searching for their ideal gown and perfecting makeup techniques.

Perceptions & Outside Perspectives

In the fall of 2014, I conducted a survey among undergraduate and graduate students at Ball State University regarding stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions about beauty pageants and pageant contestants. The results showed that most people who responded had negative views of pageants. Those surveyed used words like "unnecessary" and "pointless" to describe beauty pageants more than any other words. The majority of people surveyed described pageants as more negative than positive: more than 70 percent of descriptions people used were negative, while only about 14 percent were positive. Overall, people seem to think pageants are not just negative, but that they also serve no real purpose in modern American culture.

Pageants receive attention because they're part of media, and media plays a big part in shaping what society deems as important and expected, especially where gender issues are involved.

"Media is critical," said Ashleigh Bingham, a Ball State University graduate student working in the field of women's and gender studies. "In any kind of approach you'll find [in the] representation or presentation of women, media is absolutely vital and crucial to how we understand what beauty looks like, how we moderate what is beautiful and what is not, how one can become beautiful, and what is desirable - it's everything."

Media's influence isn't limited only to those who view it directly. According to Rachel Kraus, an associate professor of sociology at Ball State, media creates expectations for society as a whole. She said individuals might see some behavior or trait in media and then assume that everyone should be like that. This causes issues when the expectations media creates are unrealistic or unattainable, said Kraus.

Televized competitions, including many reality shows and sports events, are especially crucial in setting expectations because their winners set definitions of what is considered good, what is reward-worthy and what people should try to accomplish, according to Bingham. She said this is where beauty pageants might cause issues, because they can set narrow standards for what women should strive for, look like and do.

"When you have [pageant] contestants, the things that you're judging on and the things that you're saying are not necessarily stopping at the contest," Bingham said. "You hear, 'Oh, her walk was a bit much,' or, 'She's heavy,' or, 'She sways her hips too much.' That's not just telling one contestant that. That's telling the world."

The most immediate and obvious way that beauty pageants set expectations for women is right in the name: beauty. Contestants often represent narrow, idealized images of feminine beauty and attractiveness. Areas of competition focus on the contestant's appearance in a swimsuit and an evening gown, both of which are extremely focused on physical traits and appearance. When only certain physical attributes are rewarded, the message to audiences can be that everyone should aim to look like that, even if that's not possible or healthy.

When calculations are made based on height and weight, the majority of Miss America contestants fall into the range of being medically underweight, Kraus said. She teaches sociology courses focused on women's issues and pop culture, and she said she frequently uses Miss America contestants as an example of the media's effect on how society defines beauty.

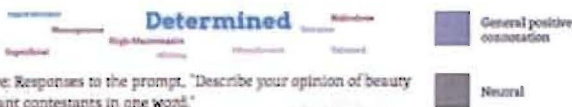
She's noticed that Miss America contestants are not only thinner than the rest of the female American population in their age range, but that they tend to get thinner every year. Despite the fact that the contestants aren't representative of most American women, Kraus said many people still see them as examples of what it means to be beautiful because the image of a thin beauty queen is so prevalent in modern society.

The features that define beauty in any era change drastically over time, and they have especially changed over the past century. Marilyn Monroe was considered an absolute sex symbol in the 1950s, Kraus said, and she was a size 12 - a size that would be considered "plus-size" by modern standards. But Kraus said most people lose sight of how subjective beauty standards are when surrounded by modern trends and media. Instead of viewing beauty as culturally constructed, she said people tend to believe that whatever image is in the media is the absolute definition of beauty, and they apply that as an expectation of both themselves and others. That can cause major problems when the dominant ideal of the era is based on a narrow and often unattainable model, like Miss America contestants.

Beauty pageants set standards beyond just external appearances. They also emphasize and reward certain behaviors, thereby setting expectations not only for the way women should look but also for how they should act. According to Katie Lawson, an associate professor of psychology at Ball State, the beauty pageant contestants that people see on TV appear to exude an air of happiness, enthusiasm and bubblyness all the time. Lawson said it's just not realistic for anyone to be constantly happy, and that the image of an ever-smiling beauty queen can put extra pressure on women to feel that it's bad or wrong to be anything but cheerful.

"I don't think it's healthy to always be bubbly and friendly - to always feel as if you have to put on a show for other people," Lawson said. "We all have bad days, grumpy days, and if someone feels like they always have to be aware of how they come off in front of others, it can be emotionally draining, and it's unrealistic."

She said the feeling of failing to achieve that idealized constant happiness can lead to depression, anxiety and other emotional issues in women. She said the combination of behavioral and physical expectations set by picture-perfect pageant princesses can cause major self-esteem issues among women who don't fit into that idealized image.



Above: Responses to the prompt, "Describe your opinion of beauty pageant contestants in one word."

That pressure holds true not only for women watching beauty pageants, but also for those who compete in them. Chloe Anagnos has competed in pageants since she was 14 years old. She currently holds the title of Miss Capital City 2015, and before that she held the title of Miss Ball State University 2014. She said that it is sometimes hard to reconcile the image she has to maintain as a titleholder with the stress and emotions going on in her real life.

"There's never a day when you're not 'on'," Anagnos said. "It's almost as if you can't have a bad day."

In reality though, people do have bad days. People also come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and personalities. When these unique differences are not represented in media, an unrealistic ideal can arise. The expectations that beauty pageants can create are not only unrepresentative of most American women, they also are often full of conflicting



Despite years of competing in pageants, Chloe Anagnos, Miss Capital City 2013, said she still feels pressure to fit into a specific image when wearing her crown and sash.

expectations."

The factors on which beauty pageant contestants are judged and rewarded tell society what women as a whole should be judged on and rewarded for, said Kraus and Bingham. When pageants focus more on physical appearance in a revealing swimsuit or expensive evening gown than on academic or career achievement, the message sent to society is that women should be valued more for their looks than their brains.

"The same way that they are judged for their bodies in swimsuits and their odd talents and their ability to solve every problem in the world in 30 seconds: that's how we're teaching people to value women," Bingham said. "It's almost a weird way of silencing women by saying, 'You have 30 seconds, and that's all we want from you.'"

Pageant contestants' minimal chance to express opinions in comparison with the large amount of time they spend showing off their physical assets and abilities can create an imbalance in the valuing of female traits, where appearance outweighs anything else. While Bingham said pageants can worsen that idea in society, Lawson said pageants aren't necessarily to blame. Rather than create expectations, she said they might just perpetuate and intensify existing ideas.

"I view pageants as more of a reflection of society, of the standards and expectations that women face," Lawson said. "Of course, this reflection of society can ultimately help to sustain these gender norms within a society, too. Girls and women may view these pageants and ultimately believe this is what a woman should be like. It can be a vicious cycle that is hard to break."

Whether they are the source of stereotypes or merely the sustenance, the televised pageants that audiences often see nonetheless send out certain messages about what constitutes an ideal woman and how women should be judged. By focusing on contestants' smiles and shapes rather than their intellect and achievements, pageant media suggests that those physical features are the ones that matter, said Lawson. That creates limiting and shallow expectations and standards for women.

With such criticism surrounding beauty pageants, the question becomes why women compete in them at all. Those who have never participated in a pageant themselves tend to view material and external rewards as the major reasons women compete in beauty pageants, according to a survey of Ball State University students. When asked to choose what factors they thought motivated women to compete, they chose options like: "To launch a performance career," "To win free clothes, products, etc.," "To make connections with influential people," and "To become famous."

The fame, prestige and recognition that come with the title of Miss America could be a major motivating factor for women to compete, said Kraus. She said that just like sports offer an avenue to fame for people who may have great physical prowess and few other skills, beauty pageants might present a similar outlet for women who believe that their looks will get them farther than their brains or achievements. Bingham agreed that pageants might seem like an easy route for reward, based on one night of competition instead of years of work.

"Who doesn't love to be adored?" Bingham said, suggesting that many contestants might enter a beauty pageant for the chance at quick fame.

But the women who compete in these pageants cited different motivations. In the survey of Ball State students, those who said they had participated in at least one pageant were more likely to indicate personal and self-improvement-related factors as motivators than the external, material motivators chosen by their non-participant peers. Among those surveyed who had been in a pageant, the motivators most often chosen were: "To improve self-confidence," "To improve public speaking skills," "To support social causes they care about," "To win scholarship money to apply toward future education," and "For fun." These choices indicate that contestants are in it for more than just fame, glory and glitter.

Stories & Personal Perspectives

While academic opinions and survey data can reveal some interesting factors at play in beauty pageants, only the women who compete in them can truly describe what the competitions are like from behind the scenes, what the rewards of competition are and what motivates them to compete. For this reason, I conducted personal interviews with several Ball State students who compete and hold titles in pageants in the Miss America system to get their perspectives. All of the women I interviewed cited scholarship money and the opportunity to gain personal and professional skills as their biggest motivators for competing, as well as the ability to support their personal platforms.

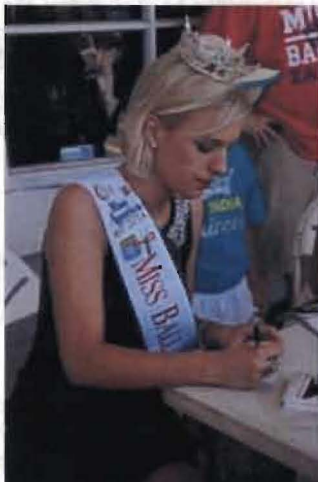
Chloe Anagnos entered her first pageant at the age of 14, encouraged in part by the fact that her babysitter was involved in them. She said she was first intrigued by pageants because the glittering gowns and talent performances reminded her of figure skating, something that a cousin and role model of hers was involved in. Anagnos is still competing years later, but she said it's not about the costumes anymore.

"I guess I didn't really realize this when I was little, but I think the idea behind it was that I would compete and I would learn these life skills that would then translate over to a professional career," Anagnos said. "Now I think everything is starting to come full circle."

Anagnos is a past president of Ball State University's Student Government Association, and she now works full time with Indiana legislators and campaigns at the state level, while attending school full time as well. She is also the recipient of the 2015 John & Elmer's Outstanding Senior Award, which is given to one graduating Ball State senior each year for university involvement, community service and academic achievement. She said the interview practice, confidence in front of crowds, ability to speak well under pressure and networking skills she learned in pageants have contributed to her university successes and her professional goals. She said she doesn't yet know where she'll be in her future, but she plans to pursue career in politics and communications.

Pageants also have helped Anagnos in her personal life. When an issue came up with Anagnos' roommates last year, Mawhorter - a fellow BSU student, who Anagnos had met only once at the Miss Ball State University competition - offered Anagnos the extra room in her apartment. The two remain roommates and best friends, brought together by their common interest in pageants and the work ethic and values they share due to their participation in these competitions.

Anagnos said pageants also have taught her how to take care of herself, motivating her to adopt a healthier lifestyle. After turning 21, Anagnos said she gained about 20 pounds in six months due to social drinking and parties. When she won the title of Miss Ball State University in February 2014, she began making changes to get healthy again. In the next four months leading up to the Miss Indiana competition, Anagnos lost 25 pounds and regained her fitness and self-confidence. Now, she said she eats less processed foods, cooks healthy meals at home and incorporates more activity throughout her day by walking to class and taking the stairs whenever possible.



Anagnos said networking and befriending so withholder has helped her in her life outside of the competitions.

began making changes to get healthy again. In the next four months leading up to the Miss Indiana competition, Anagnos lost 25 pounds and regained her fitness and self-confidence. Now, she said she eats less processed foods, cooks healthy meals at home and incorporates more activity throughout her day by walking to class and taking the stairs whenever possible.

The benefits of pageants have been more than physical for Anagnos. She also said she's learned how to be a positive role model in all situations, even when she might be tired or stressed. Anagnos said that although competing in pageants can create stress - she said she usually has one major crying spell during the week of state competition - she has also learned how to channel that stress in positive ways, motivating her to work harder. In fact, Anagnos said the pride she feels after overcoming those breakdowns boosts her self-confidence more than hurts it. Despite the occasional stress, Anagnos said her participation in pageants has been overwhelmingly more positive than negative, even when the competitions get stressful and exhausting.



Kayla Friebe, Miss Ball State University 2015, will be competing in Miss Indiana in June 2015.

Friebe also said pageants do more good than harm. In February of 2015, Anagnos passed on her crown and the title of Miss Ball State University to Friebe. Friebe said the skills she's mastered through pageants helped her secure her dream job as a flight attendant, which she will begin after graduating from Ball State.

While flight attendants might be viewed with similar stereotypes as pageant girls, the realities of the job are different than those perceptions. Friebe said the application process was grueling, narrowing down from hundreds of applicants to fewer than 20 hires. Flight attendants have to know enough about planes, flight operations and safety protocol to assist in an emergency. They have to be able to keep passengers calm who might be experiencing severe anxiety, panic attacks or claustrophobia midflight. Friebe said the communication skills and grace under pressure she learned in pageants are especially important to her future job, as flight attendants need to effectively communicate despite differences in age, culture and language and to remain calm and helpful in potentially dangerous situations.

"I think pageants produce some of the most amazing women, and they really produce women who are driven to work," Friebe said. "They are producing women who want to be doctors and lawyers and teachers - important jobs that many people don't strive for, so I think it really makes [contestants] driven."

Friebe said pageants teach lessons that no classroom ever could, while providing the scholarships that allow contestants to pursue advanced degrees and go on to great careers. She said the idea that pageants are all about looks and nothing else is incomplete, and that the image that pageant contestants often promote is getting more realistic.

"I think to years ago the image was that you need to be stick thin, blonde and beautiful, but it's progressed. The image is turning into something more positive," Friebe said, citing the fact that the recent Miss Indiana in the Miss USA pageant system, which is separate from the Miss America Organization, Mekayla Diehl, was recently praised on her "normal" body and on not conforming to the tiny, twig-like physiques most contestants sport. While Diehl is still thin by many peoples' standards - she is 5'6" and 138 pounds, wearing size 4 clothes - she is 25 pounds heavier than the average Miss USA contestant, according to an [interview with her from ET Online](#).

As for the idea that beauty pageants spread negative messages and harmful expectations about women and beauty, Friebe said that's something that's improving too, due in part to the positive actions that current contestants and titleholders are taking to be good role models. While the beauty pageants of the past may have praised only the thinnest and most typical, Friebe said pageants are evolving, presenting more diverse and realistic role models while promoting women's education.

"The spotlight can be harmful unless you take that spotlight and do something good with it," Friebe said. She said current Miss Americas and contestants are doing the latter: promoting positive platforms and inspiring young women to pursue their education and their dreams.

Miss America 2015 Kira Kazantsev has spent the first few months of her reign promoting her personal platform, "Love Shouldn't Hurt: Protecting Women Against Domestic Violence." She headed a social media campaign during October 2014, which was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and has made appearances with a variety of media outlets such as The Huffington Post to discuss the prevention of relationship violence. Kazantsev's predecessor, **Miss America 2014 Nina Davaluri**, devoted her Year of Service to celebrating cultural diversity, which was her personal platform. Her reign involved speaking about diversity at university campuses around the country and launching a social media campaign, Circles of Unity, to encourage constructive conversations about diversity issues in communities.

In addition to Miss America's personal platform work, the Miss America Organization also supports a national platform: **Children's Miracle Network Hospitals**. Contestants at all levels of competition raise money for this platform, and the organization has raised more than \$21 million total for these hospitals.

As a scholarship provider, the Miss America Organization gives thousands of dollars in financial support for contestants to pursue higher education. Scholarships are given at all levels of competition, ranging from \$50 awards at small local competitions to thousands of dollars at the state level. The newly crowned Miss America titleholder receives a \$50,000 scholarship to apply toward her college education, and each state titleholder receives several thousand dollars in scholarship just for making it to the national competition - on top of the thousands of dollars already awarded when she won her state title. Due to the scholarships available at all levels of competition, the Miss America Organization touts itself as "one of the largest providers of scholarships to women in the world."

Perceptions versus Reality

Friebe, Anagnos and other pageant contestants all said they've experienced plenty of plying glances and discriminatory comments when they tell people they're "pageant girls."

Lauren Butler, a Ball State freshman who currently holds the title of Miss White River 2015, said other people's stereotypes and prejudices against pageant contestants can be very frustrating, especially when they don't reflect the truths of her experiences.

"It's a lot more hard work than the contestants make it seem," Butler said. "It seems very easy when you're watching it all on stage, but you don't know how much practice these girls have actually put into it and how much time they've taken out of their lives so they can become better competitors and better people in general."

The hard work that contestants put into it is more than just picking out clothes and walking in heels. To prepare for the interview section, contestants study current events and social issues in order to form educated, informed opinions based on both up-to-date information and carefully considered personal values.

Contestants also practice their talents, which are often skills they have been working on for years, such as playing an instrument, dancing or singing. On top of performance-related practice, the contestants must build their personal platform through community



contestants must build their personal platform through community service, outreach events, starting campaigns or fundraising.

Butler is an art major who doesn't come off as a girly-girl in everyday interactions. She is down to earth, focused on her studies and being a normal college student. With a simple ponytail, blue jeans and humble smile, she doesn't fit the pink pizzazz image that many associate with pageant contestants. She says people who know her from class often can't reconcile her casual demeanor with their idea of what a pageant girl must be.

In one of her art classes, Butler said she was working on a self-portrait exploring the often sexualized and objectified portrayal of women in media, as well as women's work to break those barriers, which is the focus of her personal platform. Her plan was to have one side of the portrait coated in full, dramatic makeup, while the other half would be wiping that makeup off, showing that makeup isn't something a woman needs to be strong. When describing the idea to a classmate, Butler said the girl commented, "So it's like when you're in your pageant and when you're not, right?"

But Butler said the idea that she's a different person on stage and off isn't true. She said she's frustrated that even people who know her still assume that she's fake, a different version of herself, when she's competing in pageants. Her jeans and ponytail may be replaced by an evening gown and sweeping curls, but in all contexts, Butler said she is always genuine and real.

"I'm the same person when I'm in a pageant and when I'm not," Butler said. "I'm not going to act differently, but that's a big stereotype. People think you're not the same person."

Many of the stereotypes of pageant girls as fake divas who only care about a crown and sash are perpetuated in movies and TV shows that fictionalize the true pageant experience, according to Priebe. She said the ideas that media projects can be frustrating for real pageant contestants to deal with and confront.

"It's not 'Miss Congeniality,'" Priebe said, referring to a comedy movie franchise that focuses on the often-vapid antics of contestants in a fictional beauty pageant. "We're educated women who are driven to get scholarship money and have careers and live their lives to their full potential. ... [Most contestants] don't fall into any stereotype, so just get to know somebody before you make assumptions."

The best way these women said people can shake off media's stereotypes and get to know what pageant contestants are really like is to attend a pageant in person. National competitions like Miss America and Miss USA aren't the only beauty pageants that exist, and their televised broadcasts aren't the only way people can see these contests. Local and state-level pageants are happening around the country nearly every weekend, giving audiences the chance to see what goes into pageants before television and production magic take over. That's what Anagnos said she'd like to more people to see.

"I think if people would actually attend a local pageant they'd get a better understanding of the national pageant," Anagnos said. "When you've got a national pageant, you've got ads and you've got TV breaks, and you can't really get it. I'd rather people would just - instead of knocking it before they try it - just go out and experience it."

According to Anagnos, local pageants tend to give audiences more information on the various elements of the competition and how judging is conducted. For instance, she said they often explain and emphasize the importance of the interview portion and contestants' platforms and community service, while these elements are often passed over quickly in televised broadcasts.

She said audience members who attend pageants also learn more about the contestants as individuals. In on-stage introductions, the contestants briefly tell the audience and the judges who they are, where they go to school and what they are studying. They also describe their platforms and their academic or professional goals. Anagnos said live audiences get to see every single contestant compete in every element of competition, not just the top 10 or 15, which can help audiences recognize and relate to the women as real people, not just as pretty figures on a screen for a few seconds.

Inside Experience

In February 2014, I decided to see what pageants are really like from the inside by competing in the Miss Ball State University pageant. That one night of competition took months of preparation: finding and practicing my talent - singing - building my resume of volunteer work and platform advocacy, staying constantly up to date on current events, forming developed, informed opinions, and even practicing walking gracefully in sky-high heels. This intense preparation meant I could defend my opinions with facts and examples and that I was confident to step on-stage for every aspect of the competition.



Preparing for and competing in the 2014 Miss Ball State University pageant in February was a huge challenge that I enjoyed.

In developing my platform, I chose an organization that I was passionate about, Heifer International, and I took action to promote it, creating a fundraiser at my university to teach people about the group's mission of creating sustainable pathways out of poverty through skills-education. And yes, I did go shopping for a gown and swimsuit, stomp back and forth in my small apartment in those 5-inch heels, and teach myself how to apply eyeliner and false eyelashes symmetrically - but the physical, external work made up a small portion of the time I spent preparing.

The contestants I encountered backstage were nothing like the air-headed blondes or screaming divas of reality TV and fiction. Instead of backstabbing, ruthless competitors, I found compassionate women who were willing to help each other with anything from a broken zipper to an emotional meltdown. The positive energy that buzzed backstage was nothing like the vitriolic air of competition I expected. While plenty of time was spent curling hair, applying makeup and adjusting garments, more women were spending their downtime backstage doing homework, reading the news, munching on snacks or even taking naps. The contestants were not plastic airheads fighting for a crown. They were real women who channeled their love of performing and their passion for a cause into competition to earn scholarships for the education that could propel them into careers.

While my experiences changed my own perceptions and stereotypes about pageant contestants, the work that goes into competition and the motivations for competing, arguments against pageants will remain. Although all pageants in the Miss America Organization include an intense and nerve-racking private interview that tests the contestants' knowledge of social, political and cultural issues as well as their ability to communicate well under pressure, those interviews don't make it to TV. What most audiences see is all the glitz and glamour, the bikinis and gowns that seem to define womanhood as being pretty and nothing more.

The reality of competing in a beauty pageant can be an inspirational experience that teaches women invaluable career and personal skills and funds educational opportunities, but the presence of pageants in the media nonetheless remains narrow and potentially negative. Televised broadcasts of pageants focus on the contestants' outfits and physiques, while academic achievements and aspirations are often mentioned only in passing alongside fun facts about strange hobbies or favorite animals. There seems to be a disconnect between pageants in media and pageants in real life, and this is where debate about whether the harm of beauty pageants outweighs the good arises.



Lauren Butler, Miss White River area, said many other friends and classmates don't believe that she competes in pageants because she doesn't seem like a "pageant girl."

Most beauty pageants are scholarship competitions that emphasize community service and intellectual achievement, rewarding winners with money to fund further education, but that purpose is often clouded by the pageant's apparent desire to promote a narrow, unrealistic version of ideal womanhood. The realities of competition that are apparent before the competition and behind the scenes – the hours of community service, weeks of preparation, and passionate, intelligent competitors – don't have the glitz and glam appeal of the onstage action. In the televised broadcasts that most people see, these positive elements of pageants go unseen while bikini bodies and expensive evening gowns get the glory and the attention, defining what beauty pageants are to most audiences. According to Bingham, this conflict is what creates the problem with pageants.

"Sometimes what something is defined as is not nearly as important as how it functions in society," Bingham said. "There's nothing wrong with actually participating in a beauty pageant, [but] what it stands for is questionable."

Anagnos and Friebe suggested that pageants themselves aren't the issue so much as the way they are presented. They agreed that if audiences saw more of the interview process and less of the contestant's beach bodies, or that if broadcasts focused more on academic and career achievements than on quirky fun facts, beliefs about beauty pageants and contestants might change.

While it is true that the Miss America pageant started as nothing more than entertainment, things have changed over the past nine decades. The bathing beauty competition of the 1920s has been replaced by a system in which motivated, intelligent women vie for the opportunity to promote an issue they are passionate about and receive scholarships to fund their education. Bikinis and rhinestones are still part of the competition, but for the women involved in beauty pageant competitions, these superficial elements play a smaller role than the scholarships, community service, social platforms and personal growth pageants offer.

It can be easy to criticize something that doesn't seem real, and the highly-produced and fictionalized media that currently presents beauty pageants doesn't seem real at all. Butler said she'd like to see television broadcasts of pageants that focus on just how normal most pageant contestants are, and how driven and hardworking they must be to compete in these pageants.

This fall, in the dusk of a mid-September evening, a tradition will begin again. In Atlantic City, 52 young women will prepare for competition, and I will heat up pizza rolls and scoop ice cream.

But this time I will watch differently. I won't mock any contestant's scrambled answer to her onstage questions. Instead, I'll sympathize with the pressure of having only a few seconds to develop, frame and express an opinion on a highly charged political issue. I won't roll my eyes in the swimwear competition; I'll consider and notice with respect how much time and work the contestants put into getting fit and staying healthy. And when the next Miss America is crowned in a swirl of tears and roses, I will understand her overwhelming joy, knowing that there's more to a beauty queen than a crown and a sash.

HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

BEAUTIFUL

Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project is part of a Senior Honors Thesis for the Ball State University Honors College. The project aims to explore the differences between perceptions and realities regarding beauty pageants and pageant contestants, inspired by the author's personal experiences competing in beauty pageants.

About Sara



Sara Dreibelbis is a graduating senior at Ball State University, majoring in journalism and telecommunications with a minor in sociology. She entered her first beauty pageant on a total whim, and

was instantly captivated by how different the experience was from her expectations. Never one to let go of curiosity, she continued not only to compete in beauty pageants but also to research and investigate all aspects of pageants, from interviewing current contestants and titleholders to tracing the history of pageants back hundreds of years. Through this project, she hopes to make audiences think a little bit more not only about beauty pageants, but about the perceptions they hold about things they've never experienced. Sometimes trying is the best way to learn!

After graduation, Sara will be working in New York City as an IRTS 2015 Summer Fellow with Fartz Productions, a Brooklyn-based company producing documentary and lifestyle film and television programs for outlets like CNN, OWN, National Geographic and the Discovery Channel.

Outside of her work, Sara enjoys cooking, doing crossword puzzles with her dad and riding monstrous roller coasters with her mom.

[View Sara's Portfolio](#)

Get in touch: [in](#) [m](#) [f](#)

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Further Resources

To learn more about the Miss America Organization and beauty pageants in American culture, please visit the links below:

Miss America

SINCE 1921

[The Miss America Organization](#)



[PBS American Experience: Miss America](#)



**Children's
Miracle Network
Hospitals**

Helping Local Kids

[MAO & Children's Miracle Network Hospitals](#)

Along with this website, the author has also written a separate article discussing and analyzing the data gathered in her recent survey of college students regarding their perceptions and beliefs about beauty pageants, as mentioned in the "Perceptions" section of this site. The full article is available for download via the link below.

[Download the Article](#)

HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

“Competition: Behind the Scenes” – interactive text-and-photo slideshow
(<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>)

This slideshow is an interactive component of the website, found on the “Stories” page. Users can click through slides of text and photos that walk them through what pageant competitions are like behind the scenes. The text content from the full slideshow can be found in the following pages.

BEAUTIFUL

Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

HOMESTORIESPERCEPTIONSABOUT

STORIES

What is it like to be a “pageant girl”?


Competition: Behind the Scenes

It takes more than a winning smile to become Miss America, and the competition doesn’t begin on the night of the final pageant. Every year, thousands of young women across the U.S. vie for the chance to represent their communities and compete for the opportunity to be their state’s titleholder at the Miss America competition in September. Although less public and glamorous than the national pageant, these local competitions are the backbone of the Miss America Organization. Here’s a look behind the scenes at what it takes to get to Miss America.

The Local Pageant

7:30 a.m. – Check-in

Contestants check into the venue. Many local competitions are held in high school auditoriums or small community theaters, and contestants often have little space to organize their dress racks laden with heavy garment bags, suitcases full of shoes and accessories, and backpacks full of homework to fill the time backstage. While some venues have full dressing rooms, others may have only a blocked-off hallway where contestants will spend the day and prepare for the competition.



Competition: Behind the Scenes – interactive text-and-photo slideshow

This content can be found on “Stories” page of the website (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>, see photo on previous page) near the top of the page. The information is presented in an interactive slideshow, in which audiences can click through each step in the process of pageant competition in the Miss America Organization. Each slide contains text explaining an element of pageant competition, and several slides are supplemented with photographs.

The full text from each slide is included below. The underlined headings denote a new slide and represent the heading that appears on that slide. Several headings below are in parenthesis and say “photo slide.” These parenthetical headings do not actually appear on the site. They simply denote specific slides that include photographs, the majority of which do not have text headings.

Introductory text:

It takes more than a winning smile to become Miss America, and the competition doesn’t begin on the night of the final pageant. Every year, thousands of young women across the U.S. vie for the chance to represent their communities and compete for the opportunity to be their state’s titleholder at the Miss America competition in September. Although less public and glamorous than the national pageant, these local competitions are the backbone of the Miss America Organization. Here’s a look behind the scenes at what it takes to get to Miss America.

The Local Pageant: 7:30 a.m. – Check-in

Contestants check into the venue. Many local competitions are held in high school auditoriums or small community theaters, and contestants often have little space to organize their dress racks laden with heavy garment bags, suitcases full of shoes and accessories, and backpacks full of homework to fill the time backstage. While some venues have full dressing rooms, others may have only a blocked-off hallway where contestants will spend the day and prepare for the competition.

The Local Pageant: 8:00 a.m. – Orientation

Contestants meet the pageant director and anyone who will be helping throughout the day, including choreographers, emcees, performers or backstage volunteers. The director lays out the schedule for the day, and contestants receive their competition numbers. These numbers represent their order in the competition, something that many contestants view with superstition, fingers crossed for their lucky numbers.

The Local Pageant: 9:00 a.m. – Group Rehearsals

Most pageants have an opening number, a simple and fun group dance performance that introduces the contestants to the audience. The contestants often have only 15 to 30 minutes to learn the choreography early in the day, then it’s up to them to rehearse and make sure they know the piece before show time. During these rehearsals contestants also learn the walking patterns for the swimwear and eveningwear competitions. Contestants usually have only one or two chances to master the often complex patterns of turns, pauses and poses.

The Local Pageant: 12:00 p.m. – Interviews and Talent Rehearsals

The afternoon of a local pageant is often unstructured time, allowing contestants to prepare for the competition. Each contestant will participate in a personal interview and will get the chance to rehearse her talent. These tasks often take up only about 20 to 30 minutes of the afternoon, leaving the rest of the time free. Contestants cannot leave the venue during the competition day, so many women bring homework, books, computers and music to distract them from nerves and occupy their time backstage.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

Each contestant competes in talent, and the afternoon provides time for each contestant to run through her talent performance onstage. These rehearsals give the backstage tech crew a chance to ensure that contestants' accompaniment tracks work correctly and to prepare lighting cues for each woman's performance. It also gives the contestants an opportunity to get a feel for the stage, which may be a different size or material than they're used to working with. In order to provide time for every contestant to rehearse, most women will only get the chance to run through their talent on stage once or twice.

The Local Pageant: Afternoon - Interviews

Contestants also do a personal interview with the judges during the afternoon. Interviews account for 25 percent of a contestant's final score, although audiences never get to see them. Interviews last 10 minutes. Nine and a half minutes are devoted to judges' questions, which may be based on the contestant's chosen personal platform, information from her resume, or about current social, cultural and political issues. Interviews are not judged based on a contestant's answers, but instead on her ability to express opinions clearly, think logically, and respond with poise and intellect in a high-pressure situation. The last 30 seconds of the interview belong to the contestant: this is her time to sum up any final thoughts, discuss a point she didn't get to mention earlier, or simply make a last impression with the judges.

The Local Pageant: 4:00 p.m. – Final Rehearsal

Although there is not time for a full dress rehearsal, a final run through of the show can help to prevent any issues that might arise. This rehearsal usually includes a full run through of the opening number, then each contestant has the chance to practice her swimwear and eveningwear walks once. There is no time for contestants to rehearse their talent. Finally, the director explains how crowning will work and lets the contestants know what they should do if they get any awards.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide) 4:30 p.m. – Audience Opens, Final Preparations

While audience members file into the theater, the contestants prepare backstage. The 30 minutes go by in a blur of false eyelashes, lipstick, high heels and garment tape. At five minutes till the show, contestants line up backstage for opening number.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide) 5:00 p.m. – The Competition

The lights go down and the show begins. First is the opening number, for which there is no score awarded. At the end of the dance, each contestant introduces herself, often by name, college or hometown, academic major or career aspirations, personal platform and contestant number.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

As soon as contestants leave the stage from the opening number, contestant number one heads right back out to answer her onstage question. These questions may be on a social issue or current event, or they may focus on a contestant's personal platform. Contestants never know the exact question before they are on stage, faced with a microphone and a few seconds to form a cohesive, powerful answer. This portion accounts for 5 percent of each contestant's score.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

Talent performances often come next. Contestants rush off stage to change into costumes and warm up. Each contestant has 90 seconds to perform her dance, vocal talent, ventriloquism, speed painting, or any other talent she feels showcases her best. This portion accounts for 35 percent of each contestant's score, the largest single contributor to her total score.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

The swimwear performance is next, often the most dreaded but also the quickest part of the competition. With loud, energetic music pulsing through the auditorium, each contestant has just a few seconds to do her walk. The swimwear competition is often known as the "Lifestyle and Fitness" competition, as it is intended to let each contestant show off her healthy, fit body, achieved through hard work and a commitment to a healthy lifestyle. This portion accounts for 15 percent of each contestant's score.

The Local Pageant: 7:00 p.m. - Intermission

There is often an intermission before the evening wear competition, as well as some performances from local talent. This gives contestants time to redo their hair or makeup and to change into their gowns.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

The eveningwear competition allows each contestant to show off her personal sense of style, as well as her confidence and poise. Contestants' slow, graceful walks give them more time onstage for this competition than the swimwear competition, giving them one final chance to make an impression on the judges. This portion accounts for 20 percent of each contestant's score.

The Local Pageant: 8:00 p.m.

Once eveningwear performances are done, the competition is over. Now it is time to wait backstage while judges' scores are calculated, and nerves build quickly. It is often near 8:00 p.m. by the time eveningwear is over, which means contestants have spent 12 hours rehearsing, preparing and performing. While scores are tabulated, the former titleholder gives a farewell speech, and other performers may entertain the audience.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

Score tabulation is a complicated process. Once all judges' scores have been submitted, the highest and lowest scores for each contestant are discarded. Then the names of the five women with the highest total scores are given to the judges, and they rank them in order, with the contestant they want to win the title first. These orders are averaged to determine the order of the top five, from fourth runner-up (fifth place) through to the titleholder. When the judges are ready, the contestants are notified and file back on stage.

(The Local Pageant: photo slide)

The new titleholder is not announced right away. Instead, several preliminary awards are given to honor contestants with outstanding achievements in certain aspects both in and outside of the competition. Awards may be given for community service, congeniality, and each category of competition. After this it is time for placements. The fourth runner up is announced first, then third, second and first runners up in that order. Finally, the winning contestant is announced and receives her crown and sash.

The Local Pageant: 9:00 p.m. – Check-out

Now that the competition is over, award winners take photos and then all contestants must clean and pack up everything backstage and move out of the venue.

Local Titleholder's Year of Service

For the year following the pageant, the local titleholder will be a figure and volunteer in her community. Many titleholders take the opportunity to promote their personal platforms while also supporting the Miss America Organization's national platform, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. If the local competition is connected with a university, county or region, the titleholder may make appearances at schools, events and meetings. This year is also time for the titleholder and her director to prepare her for the state competition in the summer.

State Competition (photo slide)

While local competitions last only one day, state competitions take place over an entire week. Every day, contestants have to be awake and ready to go early in the day. For the first three to four days of the week, contestants spend the mornings, afternoons and evenings rehearsing in between appearances, luncheons and dinners with local hospitals, service organizations or events.

State Competition

In the last three days of the competition week, preliminary competitions replace evening rehearsals. Contestants compete in one to two categories each day: eveningwear and swimwear one day, talent another and onstage question on another, as well as offstage interview. The scores from these preliminary competitions determine the top 10 contestants for the final competition, as well as category awards.

(State Competition: photo slide)

The final night is the full competition. Each contestant participates in an opening number and introductions, and then the top 10 contestants are announced. They compete in talent, swimwear and eveningwear, then the top five is announced. These five contestants compete in onstage question, and then the awards are announced: runners up and the titleholder.

State Titleholder's Year of Service

Over the next year, the titleholder continues her work with her local platform and the Miss America Organization's national platform, but now the higher prestige of her title allows her higher profile appearances and service opportunities. She and the state pageant director work on her interview skills, talent performance and wardrobe and technique for swimwear and eveningwear in preparation for the national competition: the Miss America Pageant.

National Competition

The Miss America Pageant takes place in September, near Labor Day. Contestants come to Atlantic City a few weeks before the competition to get to know each other and to make appearances at hospitals within the Children's Miracle Network system as well as at other events, including a parade. The contestants' time is filled with rehearsals and preliminary competitions until the final show, all of which runs similarly to the state competition.

(National Competition: photo slide)

During the final competition, all contestants perform in an opening number and introductions before the competition is whittled down to the top 16, top 10, top 8 and finally top 5. After several hours of performances and competition, the awards are announced and the next Miss America receives her crown.

Miss America's Year of Service

Miss America uses the prominence and prestige of her title to promote her personal platform and act as a goodwill ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Her year involves a yearlong tour of the country, visiting a different city every other day to speak at schools, hospitals, events and local organizations. After her Year of Service, many Miss Americas continue their education, using the scholarship money won during the competition to complete a degree in law, medicine or another influential field. Although she is only Miss America for a year, her influence and impact continue in her legacy of service, style, scholarship and success.

“Holding a Title & Wearing the Crown” – audio slideshow

(<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>)

This audio slideshow is a multimedia component of the website, found on the “Stories” page. Users can hear audio from a personal interview with a pageant contestant, Chloe Anagnos, while seeing relevant photos from her experience in beauty pageant competitions.



Holding a Title & Wearing the Crown

Chloe Anagnos has been competing in pageants since she was 14 years old. She has held numerous titles in the Miss America Organization, and has competed in both the Miss Indiana's Outstanding Teen and Miss Indiana Pageants. For Anagnos, pageants are about more than rhinestones and roses.



The History of an Institution

“Holding a Title & Wearing the Crown” – audio slideshow

This content can be found on “Stories” page of the website (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>, see photo on previous page) near the center of the page. It profiles Chloe Anagnos, a Ball State student and current titleholder within the Miss America Organization. Anagnos has participated in pageants since she was 14 years old. The slideshow incorporates photos of Anagnos from throughout her years competing in pageants along with audio from a personal interview I conducted with her about her participation and experiences in beauty pageants. The enclosed DVD includes the same audio slideshow in two different formats to ensure playability on a variety of computers and devices. Both formats will play in QuickTime or iTunes.

“The History of an Institution” – interactive timeline

(<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>)

This timeline is an interactive component of the website, found on the “Stories” page. Users can click through various events in the history of the Miss America Organization. All of the events include text, while some also have photos. The text content from the full timeline can be found in the following pages.

The History of an Institution

The Miss America Organization has changed significantly from its inception in 1921 to become the competition and spectacle it is today. Here are some highlights of the moments that have helped to shape the Miss America Pageant over the past century.

Getting to Miss America

From bathing beauties in seaside shows through searing scandals and prominent protests to a legacy of style, service, scholarship and success: the history of the Miss America Organization and pageant.



Miss America



HOME

STORIES

PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT

“The History of an Institution” – interactive timeline

This content can be found on “Stories” page of the website (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!stories/c1pz>, see photo on previous page) near the bottom of the page. The information is presented in an interactive timeline that describes major events in the history of the Miss America Organization. Each event on the timeline includes a heading and some explanatory text, and some also include photographs.

The full text of the slideshow is included below. The underlined headings denote a new event on the timeline and represent its heading in the timeline. The word “photo” in parenthesis in a heading indicates that when users are viewing that timeline event, there is a photo with a caption included with the text.

Introductory Text:

The Miss America Organization has changed significantly from its inception in 1921 to become the competition and spectacle it is today. Here are some highlights of the moments that have helped to shape the Miss America Pageant over the past century.

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July 1880: America's first beauty pageant - the Miss United States contest

America's first beauty pageant takes place at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, in the summer of 1880. The pageant is an attempt to attract tourists to the area. In order to compete, women must be no older than 25, unmarried and weigh less than 130 pounds. The prize for the winner is a bridal trousseau.

September 1920: Fall Frolic of 1920 - the predecessor to Miss America

The idea for the first Fall Frolic in Atlantic City is attributed to Conrad Eckholm of the Monticello Hotel. The idea of a weeklong September festival of events is proposed as a way to extend the tourism season beyond Labor Day. The Fall Frolic of 1920 does not include an actual beauty pageant, but it does include a Rolling Chair Contest, in which entrants parade in decorated chairs, and prizes are awarded to winners in various categories.

September 7, 1921: Fall Frolic of 1921 - the first Miss America pageant (photo)

Atlantic City newspaperman Harry Finlay has the idea to include a "popularity contest" in newspapers throughout the country as part of the Fall Frolic in order to increase paper circulation. In these contests, people submit photos of girls, then winners are chosen from several cities around the country. Each of these winners - known as the Inter-City Beauty Contestants - wins a vacation to Atlantic City during the Fall Frolic. The Inter-City Beauty Contestants compete in a pageant on the boardwalk. Pageant judges include famous artists and actors, and 16-year-old Margaret Gorman, Miss Washington, wins the crown and title as the first Miss America. On that same day, there is a Bather's Revue contest that anyone can enter, but the pageant itself is open only to the Inter-City Beauty Contestants.

September 1923: The only repeat Miss America

After Mary Katherine Campbell wins the title of Miss America for the second time in a row, officials establish a rule that a woman may hold the title only once.

September 1924: The largest Miss America pageant

The Miss America contest has grown to more than 10 times its original size in only three years. It now has 84 contestants, the largest number it will ever have.

September 1926: Norma Smallwood (photo)

Norma Smallwood is the first Native American woman to win the title of Miss America.

January 1928: Pageant on hold

From 1928 to 1932, the Miss America competition is cancelled due to economic issues and backlash from religious groups and women's clubs, who argue that the pageant promotes immoral behavior among women, especially in terms of the bathing suit competition. Officials try to reinstate the pageant in 1933, but attendance is meager and it isn't worth the effort. In 1933 the title goes to 15-year-old Marian Bergeron, causing officials to institute age restrictions for contestants requiring them to be between 18 and 26 years old. The pageant is cancelled again in 1934.

September 1935: The show is back on (photo)

The Miss America pageant returns under the control of Lenora Slaughter. In her direction, it begins to look more like the competition audiences are familiar with today rather than the photo and bathing beauty contests of the early 1920s.

September 1937: New rules

Under Lenora Slaughter, pageant officials institute new behavior rules for contestants during their week in Atlantic City. These include curfews, chaperone requirements, and a restriction of communication with men - family members included.

September 1938: Fine-tuning the competition

The talent portion becomes a required element of competition, and geographic rules are instated limiting contestants to one per state. Contestants representing counties, towns and regions will no longer be allowed to compete.

September 1939: Miss Congeniality

The Miss Congeniality award is introduced to recognize the contestant that other contestants vote as most congenial, charismatic, supportive or inspiring.

September 1940: Making it official

The Miss America Organization is officially incorporated as a non-profit, and the competition is officially deemed the Miss America Pageant. It is held in Atlantic City's Convention Hall for the first time. This will remain its traditional location for decades to come.

September 1943: WWII turmoil

The pageant is almost cancelled due to America's involvement in World War II, but pageant directors decide it will be beneficial to patriotic morale and go ahead with the show.

January 1944: Focus on education

Lenora Slaughter raises \$5,000 to establish a scholarship for the winner to fund further college education. Previous winners had received prizes like jewelry, furs and movie contracts. Scholarships are given as prizes every year after this year.

September 1944: Bess Myerson (photo)

Bess Myerson is the first Jewish American woman to be crowned Miss America, and she is the first recipient of a scholarship as her prize.

September 1947: More than a pretty face

The interview portion becomes a required part of competition. This element is conducted off stage and allows judges to ask a contestant questions on a variety of social and political issues as well as personal goals and achievements.

September 1948: A classier crowning

For the first time since the competition began, the winning contestant is crowned in her evening gown. Previous winners were crowned while wearing their bathing suits.

September 1950: Yolanda Betbeze (photo)

After being crowned in her evening gown, Miss America 1951 Yolanda Betbeze refuses to be photographed or to appear in public in a bathing suit. This causes Catalina Swimwear, a previous sponsor of the Miss America Pageant, to pull its sponsorship. Catalina Swimwear goes on to found the Miss Universe pageant in 1952.

September 1953: Strengthening the system

Pageant officials create standardized rules for the local and state preliminary competitions that determine which women get to compete in the national pageant. This standardization is meant to ensure that all contestants are familiar with and prepared for all elements of the national competition, and to create more fairness across judging criteria around the nation.

September 1954: Miss America on TV (photo)

For the first time, the Miss America pageant is televised. The TV rights for the competition sell for \$10,000, with ABC earning the rights to broadcast the show. An audience of 27 million Americans tunes in. By this point, the scholarship awarded to the winner has doubled since its inception to \$10,000.

September 1955: Bert Parks (photo)

Bert Parks is hired as emcee for the pageant. He introduces the pageant's iconic theme song, "There She Is," written by Bernie Wayne.

September 1957: More awards

Pageant officials create non-finalist awards, which recognize the achievements of contestants who score extremely well in specific elements of competition but do not make it into the top five. These awards are presented for categories like eveningwear, swimwear, talent and interview.

September 1959: A full nation

For the first time, every U.S. state is represented by one contestant.

September 1966: In living color

The Miss America pageant TV broadcast is in color for the first time.

January 1967: New leadership

After more than 30 years, Lenora Slaughter retires as head of the Miss America Organization and pageant. Albert Marks replaces her as the director of the organization.

September 1968: A year of protest (photo)

While the Miss America Pageant goes on inside Atlantic City's Convention Hall, feminist protestors march on the boardwalk outside, burning effigies of "traditional womanhood" and filling trash cans with beauty tools and other trappings of traditional femininity. Meanwhile, the first Miss Black America Contest is held in Atlantic City to protest the racism, segregation and "whiteness" of the Miss America competition.

September 1970: An integrated competition (photo)

The Miss America Organization drops its rules barring non-whites from entering the competition, and Cheryl Brown, Miss Iowa, is the pageant's first black contestant.

September 1975: Feminist controversy

The National Organization for Women's national conference coincides with the Miss America Pageant, causing controversy as news stories about the two appear side-by-side.

September 1980: Lencola Sullivan (photo)

Lencola Sullivan, Miss Arkansas, is the first black contestant to make it into the pageant's top five.

September 1981: Goodbye, Bert Parks

Officials in the Miss America Organization feel that Bert Parks has become too old, too corny and too sexist to reflect the image they want to create for the pageant. They fire Parks but struggle to find a consistent emcee to replace him.

September 1983: Vanessa Williams crowned (photo)

Vanessa Williams becomes the first black Miss America.

July 1984: Vanessa Williams scandal (photo)

Two months before Williams' reign as Miss America will end, "Penthouse" magazine releases nude photos of her, taken when she was 17. The scandal forces her to resign as Miss America.

September 1987: Kaye Lani Rae Rafko (photo)

Kaye Lani Rae Rafko is the first Miss America to dedicate her entire year of reign to a social issue: care for the terminally ill.

September 1989: A personal platform

Inspired by Rafko's reign, pageant officials instate a requirement for each contestant to have a personal platform: a social issue that she will promote throughout her entire year as Miss America if crowned. The term of "Year of Service" officially replaces "reign" to describe a woman's year as Miss America.

September 1994: Heather Whitestone (photo)

Heather Whitestone is the first Miss America to have a physical handicap. She is deaf.

September 1997: More options

Changes in rules regarding the swimsuit competition mean contestants can choose to wear any type of swimsuit for competition, including both one- and two-piece swimsuits.

September 1999: Fewer options

After some revealing swimsuits cause controversy, officials change the rules regarding swimwear again. They decide to ban thongs and string bikinis.

September 2000: Angela Perez Baraquio (photo)

Angela Perez Baraquio is the first Asian American Miss America.

September 2013: Nina Davaluri (photo)

Nina Davaluri is the first Indian American Miss America.

September 2014: Kira Kazantzev (photo)

After winning the competition with a talent performance involving drumming on plastic cups, controversy quickly surrounds the newly crowned Miss America due to allegations that she was involved in sorority hazing. She publicly denies being involved in any serious hazing incidents, but several individuals who claim to be witnesses of her involvement in hazing still call for her resignation.

March 2015: Competing for a cause (photo)

While all contestants must have a personal platform that they support, the Miss America Organization's national platform for several years has been Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Contestants in all levels of competition - local, state and national - raise money for this national platform, and Miss America acts as a goodwill ambassador for CMNH hospitals throughout her Year of Service. To date, the Miss America Organization and its contestants have raised more than \$11 million for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

“Breaking it Down: Perceptions and Realities” – journalistic text story

This content can be found on the “Perceptions” page of the website (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!perceptions/cnec>, see photos on pages 5 through 10). Photos and in-text hyperlinks to outside material are included in the online story. URLs for the hyperlink content have been included in the text below. The photos can be seen online or in the screenshots on pages 6 through 11.

In the dusk of a mid-September evening, a tradition begins. In Atlantic City, 52 young women put the final touches on their makeup and steal one last glimpse in a mirror before stepping on stage for what might be the biggest competition of their lives. In Cincinnati, Ohio, a tray of pizza rolls sizzles in an oven as a kitchen timer rattles and rings. As the contestants prep and primp for the Miss America Pageant, I’m fluffing the couch cushions and getting cozy in my pajamas.

Competition-day rituals proceed as always. For the contestants, these involve glimmering jewelry, crossed fingers and hushed prayers. For my family, it’s junk food and jokes. Our satirical nod to the competition’s focus on elegance, beauty and physique includes generous servings of ice cream – a tribute to the treats we assume the contestants can’t touch – and plenty of cynical side commentary. I cannot remember a September when we didn’t sit down together to gawk at the glamour of the Miss America Pageant. In some way or another, the pageant has been a part of my life since childhood.

I’ve never had anything against beauty pageants. I’ve been involved in theater, music and dance from the age of 3, so I understand the time, work and commitment that go into perfecting a talent, as well as the nerves one fights to step onto a stage with poise and grace rather than trembling terror. But still, it’s Miss America. It was never something I took seriously – until curiosity got the best of me.

Beauty pageants have been slammed and satirized in media and pop culture for years, and I was part of the audience that fueled it. Watching the glitzy, gaudy meltdowns on reality television shows such as “Toddlers and Tiaras” and the comedic accounts of pageant princesses in movies such as “Miss Congeniality,” I thought of pageants more as the hilarious stuff of fiction and folly than as real world competitions. It wasn’t until I attended a beauty pageant in person that I realized these competitions are more than just the subjects of satire.

Every year, thousands of young women vie for the title of Miss America, competing in local pageants around the country. There must be something more than a crown and sash that keeps beauty pageants alive. After attending the 2013 Miss Ball State University pageant as an audience member and getting a brief glimpse of what goes into becoming Miss America, I decided to dive into the shimmering world of beauty pageants to see what these competitions are really like. I read, I researched, and – to get a personal perspective –

I competed. The realities, stories and experiences I discovered were much different than the glittery, giggly world I expected. There is more to beauty pageants than many people realize.

A Legacy of Beauty

In order to understand where pageants stand in modern American society, it is important to know how they started (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/missamerica/timeline/index.html>). The first Miss America pageant was a tourism stunt. It was one small event in a week of festivities called the Fall Frolic of 1921, which was organized by a group of hotel owners in Atlantic City who wanted to extend the vacation season into September. The first Miss America competitions were based on photo contests: people would submit women's photos to newspapers and readers would vote to choose the Inter-City Beauties who would then compete in Atlantic City. The women competed on the boardwalk in swimsuits and won prizes like movie contests and expensive furs.

Although the pageant started as nothing more than a swimwear spectacle, it quickly turned into something more substantial. In 1935, Lenora Slaughter took over the competition and began making changes, emphasizing contestants' talents and academic achievements. Slaughter added new requirements to the competition: an interview portion, which would test contestants' knowledge of current issues and their communication skills, and a talent competition. She also raised funds to create a scholarship for the winner to use for higher education, starting in 1944. Pageants within the Miss America Organization continue to offer thousands of dollars in scholarships to contestants every year.

More modern changes to the Miss America Organization have added a new focus of philanthropy and community service to the organization's mission of funding education. In 1989, Miss America's reign became known as the Year of Service. Titleholders now use this year to travel the country promoting the organization's national platform, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, as well as a personal platform based on a specific charity, or a health or social issue chosen by the contestant.

Now pageants in the Miss America organization incorporate elements of both the past and the present. The swimwear and evening gown components are still required parts of the competition, but so are the talent, interview and on-stage question portions. While contestants do dress up in glitter and makeup, they are also required to have a personal platform that they support through community service or fundraising. Contestants list academic achievements on their applications and study up on current events while also searching for their ideal gown and perfecting makeup techniques.

Perceptions & Outside Perspectives

In the fall of 2014, I conducted a survey among undergraduate and graduate students at Ball State University regarding stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions about beauty pageants and pageant contestants. The results showed that most people who

responded had negative views of pageants. Those surveyed used words like “unnecessary” and “pointless” to describe beauty pageants more than any other words. The majority of people surveyed described pageants as more negative than positive: more than 70 percent of descriptions people used were negative, while only about 14 percent were positive. Overall, people seem to think pageants are not just negative, but that they also serve no real purpose in modern American culture.

Pageants receive attention because they’re part of media, and media plays a big part in shaping what society deems as important and expected, especially where gender issues are involved.

“Media is critical,” said Ashleigh Bingham, a Ball State University graduate student working in the field of women’s and gender studies. “In any kind of approach you’ll find [in the] representation or presentation of women, media is absolutely vital and crucial to how we understand what beauty looks like, how we moderate what is beautiful and what is not, how one can become beautiful, and what is desirable – it’s everything.”

Media’s influence isn’t limited only to those who view it directly. According to Rachel Kraus, an associate professor of sociology at Ball State, media creates expectations for society as a whole. She said individuals might see some behavior or trait in media and then assume that everyone should be like that. This causes issues when the expectations media creates are unrealistic or unattainable, said Kraus.

Televised competitions, including many reality shows and sports events, are especially crucial in setting expectations because their winners set definitions of what is considered good, what is reward-worthy and what people should try to accomplish, according to Bingham. She said this is where beauty pageants might cause issues, because they can set narrow standards for what women should strive for, look like and do.

“When you have [pageant] contestants, the things that you’re judging on and the things that you’re saying are not necessarily stopping at the contest,” Bingham said. “You hear, ‘Oh, her walk was a bit much,’ or, ‘She’s heavy,’ or, ‘She sways her hips too much.’ That’s not just telling one contestant that. That’s telling the world.”

The most immediate and obvious way that beauty pageants set expectations for women is right in the name: beauty. Contestants often represent narrow, idealized images of feminine beauty and attractiveness. Areas of competition focus on the contestant’s appearance in a swimsuit and an evening gown, both of which are extremely focused on physical traits and appearance. When only certain physical attributes are rewarded, the message to audiences can be that everyone should aim to look like that, even if that’s not possible or healthy.

When calculations are made based on height and weight, the majority of Miss America contestants fall into the range of being medically underweight, Kraus said. She teaches sociology courses focused on women’s issues and pop culture, and she said she frequently uses Miss America contestants as an example of the media’s effect on how society defines beauty.

She's noticed that Miss America contestants are not only thinner than the rest of the female American population in their age range, but that they tend to get thinner every year. Despite the fact that the contestants aren't representative of most American women, Kraus said many people still see them as examples of what it means to be beautiful because the image of a thin beauty queen is so prevalent in modern society.

The features that define beauty in any era change drastically over time, and they have especially changed over the past century. Marilyn Monroe was considered an absolute sex symbol in the 1950s, Kraus said, and she was a size 12 – a size that would be considered “plus-size” by modern standards. But Kraus said most people lose sight of how subjective beauty standards are when surrounded by modern trends and media. Instead of viewing beauty as culturally constructed, she said people tend to believe that whatever image is in the media is the absolute definition of beauty, and they apply that as an expectation of both themselves and others. That can cause major problems when the dominant ideal of the era is based on a narrow and often unattainable model, like Miss America contestants.

Beauty pageants set standards beyond just external appearances. They also emphasize and reward certain behaviors, thereby setting expectations not only for the way women should look but also for how they should act. According to Katie Lawson, an associate professor of psychology at Ball State, the beauty pageant contestants that people see on TV appear to exude an air of happiness, enthusiasm and bubblyness all the time. Lawson said it's just not realistic for anyone to be constantly happy, and that the image of an ever-smiling beauty queen can put extra pressure on women to feel that it's bad or wrong to be anything but cheerful.

“I don't think it's healthy to always be bubbly and friendly – to always feel as if you have to put on a show for other people,” Lawson said. “We all have bad days, grumpy days, and if someone feels like they always have to be aware of how they come off in front of others, it can be emotionally draining, and it's unrealistic.”

She said the feeling of failing to achieve that idealized constant happiness can lead to depression, anxiety and other emotional issues in women. She said the combination of behavioral and physical expectations set by picture-perfect pageant princesses can cause major self-esteem issues among women who don't fit into that idealized image.

That pressure holds true not only for women watching beauty pageants, but also for those who compete in them. Chloe Anagnos has competed in pageants since she was 14 years old. She currently holds the title of Miss Capital City 2015, and before that she held the title of Miss Ball State University 2014. She said that it is sometimes hard to reconcile the image she has to maintain as a titleholder with the stress and emotions going on in her real life.

“There's never a day when you're not ‘on’,” Anagnos said. “It's almost as if you can't have a bad day.”

In reality though, people do have bad days. People also come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and personalities. When these unique differences are not represented in media, an unrealistic ideal can arise. The expectations that beauty pageants can create are not only unrepresentative of most American women, they also are often full of conflicting concepts.

"We have this idea that women are curvaceous yet slim, beautiful but modest, sexy and smart, and yet we give them 20 seconds to answer a question that is asking them to save the world," Bingham said.

One major flaw in media about beauty pageants, according to Bingham and Lawson, is that it represents a very narrow idea of what constitutes reward-worthy femininity.

"It's all very physical," Kraus said. "It very much perpetuates the stereotype that not only should women look, act and be a certain way, but also that this is what they are valued on and rewarded for: meeting these very narrow kinds of definitions and expectations."

The factors on which beauty pageant contestants are judged and rewarded tell society what women as a whole should be judged on and rewarded for, said Kraus and Bingham. When pageants focus more on physical appearance in a revealing swimsuit or expensive evening gown than on academic or career achievement, the message sent to society is that women should be valued more for their looks than their brains.

"The same way that they are judged for their bodies in swimsuits and their odd talents and their ability to solve every problem in the world in 20 seconds: that's how we're teaching people to value women," Bingham said. "It's almost a weird way of silencing women by saying, 'You have 20 seconds, and that's all we want from you.'"

Pageant contestants' minimal chance to express opinions in comparison with the large amount of time they spend showing off their physical assets and abilities can create an imbalance in the valuing of female traits, where appearance outweighs anything else. While Bingham said pageants can worsen that idea in society, Lawson said pageants aren't necessarily to blame. Rather than create expectations, she said they might just perpetuate and intensify existing ideas.

"I view pageants as more of a reflection of society, of the standards and expectations that women face," Lawson said. "Of course, this reflection of society can ultimately help to sustain these gender norms within a society, too. Girls and women may view these pageants and ultimately believe this is what a woman should be like. It can be a vicious cycle that is hard to break."

Whether they are the source of stereotypes or merely the sustenance, the televised pageants that audiences often see nonetheless send out certain messages about what constitutes an ideal woman and how women should be judged. By focusing on contestants' smiles and shapes rather than their intellect and achievements, pageant media suggests that those physical features are the ones that matter, said Lawson. That creates limiting and shallow expectations and standards for women.

With such criticism surrounding beauty pageants, the question becomes why women compete in them at all. Those who have never participated in a pageant themselves tend to view material and external rewards as the major reasons women compete in beauty pageants, according to a survey of Ball State University students. When asked to choose what factors they thought motivated women to compete, they chose options like: “To launch a performance career,” “To win free clothes, products, etc.,” “To make connections with influential people,” and “To become famous.”

The fame, prestige and recognition that come with the title of Miss America could be a major motivating factor for women to compete, said Kraus. She said that just like sports offer an avenue to fame for people who may have great physical prowess and few other skills, beauty pageants might present a similar outlet for women who believe that their looks will get them farther than their brains or achievements. Bingham agreed that pageants might seem like an easy route for reward, based on one night of competition instead of years of work.

“Who doesn’t love to be adored?” Bingham said, suggesting that many contestants might enter a beauty pageant for the chance at quick fame.

But the women who compete in these pageants cited different motivations. In the survey of Ball State students, those who said they had participated in at least one pageant were more likely to indicate personal and self-improvement-related factors as motivators than the external, material motivators chosen by their non-participant peers. Among those surveyed who had been in a pageant, the motivators most often chosen were: “To improve self-confidence,” “To improve public speaking skills,” “To support social causes they care about,” “To win scholarship money to apply toward future education,” and “For fun.” These choices indicate that contestants are in it for more than just fame, glory and glitter.

Stories & Personal Perspectives

While academic opinions and survey data can reveal some interesting factors at play in beauty pageants, only the women who compete in them can truly describe what the competitions are like from behind the scenes, what the rewards of competition are and what motivates them to compete. For this reason, I conducted personal interviews with several Ball State students who compete and hold titles in pageants in the Miss America system to get their perspectives. All of the women I interviewed cited scholarship money and the opportunity to gain personal and professional skills as their biggest motivators for competing, as well as the ability to support their personal platforms.

Chloe Anagnos entered her first pageant at the age of 14, encouraged in part by the fact that her babysitter was involved in them. She said she was first intrigued by pageants because the glittering gowns and talent performances reminded her of figure skating, something that a cousin and role model of hers was involved in. Anagnos is still competing years later, but she said it’s not about the costumes anymore.

“I guess I didn’t really realize this when I was little, but I think the idea behind it was that I would compete and I would learn these life skills that would then translate over to a professional career,” Anagnos said. “Now I think everything is starting to come full circle.”

Anagnos is a past president of Ball State University’s Student Government Association, and she now works full time with Indiana legislators and campaigns at the state level, while attending school full time as well. She is also the recipient of the 2015 John R. Emens Outstanding Senior Award, which is given to one graduating Ball State senior each year for university involvement, community service and academic achievement. She said the interview practice, confidence in front of crowds, ability to speak well under pressure and networking skills she learned in pageants have contributed to her university successes and her professional goals. She said she doesn’t yet know where she’ll be in her future, but she plans to pursue career in politics and communications.

Pageants also have helped Anagnos in her personal life. When an issue came up with Anagnos’ roommates last year, Mawhorter – a fellow BSU student, who Anagnos had met only once at the Miss Ball State University competition – offered Anagnos the extra room in her apartment. The two remain roommates and best friends, brought together by their common interest in pageants and the work ethic and values they share due to their participation in these competitions.

Anagnos said pageants also have taught her how to take care of herself, motivating her to adopt a healthier lifestyle. After turning 21, Anagnos said she gained about 20 pounds in six months due to social drinking and parties. When she won the title of Miss Ball State University in February 2014, she began making changes to get healthy again. In the next four months leading up to the Miss Indiana competition, Anagnos lost 25 pounds and regained her fitness and self-confidence. Now, she said she eats less processed foods, cooks healthy meals at home and incorporates more activity throughout her day by walking to class and taking the stairs whenever possible.

The benefits of pageants have been more than physical for Anagnos. She also said she’s learned how to be a positive role model in all situations, even when she might be tired or stressed. Anagnos said that although competing in pageants can create stress – she said she usually has one major crying spell during the week of state competition – she has also learned how to channel that stress in positive ways, motivating her to work harder. In fact, Anagnos said the pride she feels after overcoming those breakdowns boosts her self-confidence more than hurts it. Despite the occasional stress, Anagnos said her participation in pageants has been overwhelmingly more positive than negative, even when the competitions get stressful and exhausting.

Priebe also said pageants do more good than harm. In February of 2015, Anagnos passed on her crown and the title of Miss Ball State University to Priebe. Priebe said the skills she’s mastered through pageants helped her secure her dream job as a flight attendant, which she will begin after graduating from Ball State.

While flight attendants might be viewed with similar stereotypes as pageant girls, the realities of the job are different than those perceptions. Priebe said the application process was grueling, narrowing down from hundreds of applicants to fewer than 20 hires. Flight attendants have to know enough about planes, flight operations and safety protocol to assist in an emergency. They have to be able to keep passengers calm who might be experiencing severe anxiety, panic attacks or claustrophobia midflight. Priebe said the communication skills and grace under pressure she learned in pageants are especially important to her future job, as flight attendants need to effectively communicate despite differences in age, culture and language and to remain calm and helpful in potentially dangerous situations.

“I think pageants produce some of the most amazing women, and they really produce women who are driven to work,” Priebe said. “They are producing women who want to be doctors and lawyers and teachers – important jobs that many people don’t strive for, so I think it really makes [contestants] driven.”

Priebe said pageants teach lessons that no classroom ever could, while providing the scholarships that allow contestants to pursue advanced degrees and go on to great careers. She said the idea that pageants are all about looks and nothing else is incomplete, and that the image that pageant contestants often promote is getting more realistic.

“I think 10 years ago the image was that you need to be stick thin, blonde and beautiful, but it’s progressed. The image is turning into something more positive,” Priebe said, citing the fact that the recent Miss Indiana in the Miss USA pageant system, which is separate from the Miss America Organization, Mekayla Diehl, was recently praised on her “normal” body and on not conforming to the tiny, twig-like physiques most contestants sport. While Diehl is still thin by many peoples’ standards – she is 5’8” and 138 pounds, wearing size 4 clothes – she is 25 pounds heavier than the average Miss USA contestant, according to an [interview with her from ET Online](http://www.etonline.com/news/147313_miss_indiana_mekayla_diehl_on_becoming_a_social_media_phenom/?viewFull=true) (http://www.etonline.com/news/147313_miss_indiana_mekayla_diehl_on_becoming_a_social_media_phenom/?viewFull=true).

As for the idea that beauty pageants spread negative messages and harmful expectations about women and beauty, Priebe said that’s something that’s improving too, due in part to the positive actions that current contestants and titleholders are taking to be good role models. While the beauty pageants of the past may have praised only the thinnest and most typical, Priebe said pageants are evolving, presenting more diverse and realistic role models while promoting women’s education.

“The spotlight can be harmful unless you take that spotlight and do something good with it,” Priebe said. She said current Miss Americas and contestants are doing the latter: promoting positive platforms and inspiring young women to pursue their education and their dreams.

Miss America 2015, Kira Kazantzev (<http://www.missamerica.org/miss-america/meet-miss-america.aspx>), has spent the first few months of her reign promoting

her personal platform, “Love Shouldn’t Hurt: Protecting Women Against Domestic Violence.” She headed a social media campaign during October 2014, which was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and has made appearances with a variety of media outlets such as the The Huffington Post to discuss the prevention of relationship violence. Kazantzev’s predecessor, Miss America 2014 Nina Davaluri (<http://ninadavaluri.com/>), devoted her Year of Service to celebrating cultural diversity, which was her personal platform. Her reign involved speaking about diversity at university campuses around the country and launching a social media campaign, Circles of Unity, to encourage constructive conversations about diversity issues in communities.

In addition to Miss America’s personal platform work, the Miss America Organization also supports a national platform: Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals (<https://giveamiracle.childrensmiraclenetworkhospitals.org/>). Contestants at all levels of competition raise money for this platform, and the organization has raised more than \$11 million total for these hospitals.

As a scholarship provider, the Miss America Organization gives thousands of dollars in financial support for contestants to pursue higher education. Scholarships are given at all levels of competition, ranging from \$50 awards at small local competitions to thousands of dollars at the state level. The newly crowned Miss America titleholder receives a \$50,000 scholarship to apply toward her college education, and each state titleholder receives several thousand dollars in scholarship just for making it to the national competition – on top of the thousands of dollars already awarded when she won her state title. Due to the scholarships available at all levels of competition, the Miss America Organization touts itself as “one of the largest providers of scholarships to women in the world.”

Perceptions versus Reality

Priebe, Anagnos and other pageant contestants all said they’ve experienced plenty of pitying glances and discriminatory comments when they tell people they’re “pageant girls.”

Lauren Butler, a Ball State freshman who currently holds the title of Miss White River 2015, said other people’s stereotypes and prejudices against pageant contestants can be very frustrating, especially when they don’t reflect the truths of her experiences.

“It’s a lot more hard work than the contestants make it seem,” Butler said. “It seems very easy when you’re watching it all on stage, but you don’t know how much practice these girls have actually put into it and how much time they’ve taken out of their lives so they can become better competitors and better people in general.”

The hard work that contestants put into it is more than just picking out clothes and walking in heels. To prepare for the interview section, contestants study current events and social issues in order to form educated, informed opinions based on both up-to-date information and carefully considered personal values. Contestants also practice their talents, which are often skills they have been working on for years, such as playing an

instrument, dancing or singing. On top of performance-related practice, the contestants must build their personal platform through community service, outreach events, starting campaigns or fundraising.

Butler is an art major who doesn't come off as a girly-girl in everyday interactions. She is down to earth, focused on her studies and being a normal college student. With a simple ponytail, blue jeans and humble smile, she doesn't fit the pink pizzazz image that many associate with pageant contestants. She says people who know her from class often can't reconcile her casual demeanor with their idea of what a pageant girl must be.

In one of her art classes, Butler said she was working on a self-portrait exploring the often sexualized and objectified portrayal of women in media, as well as women's work to break those barriers, which is the focus of her personal platform. Her plan was to have one side of the portrait coated in full, dramatic makeup, while the other half would be wiping that makeup off, showing that makeup isn't something a woman needs to be strong. When describing the idea to a classmate, Butler said the girl commented, "So it's like when you're in your pageant and when you're not, right?"

But Butler said the idea that she's a different person on stage and off isn't true. She said she's frustrated that even people who know her still assume that she's fake, a different version of herself, when she's competing in pageants. Her jeans and ponytail may be replaced by an evening gown and sweeping curls, but in all contexts, Butler said she is always genuine and real.

"I'm the same person when I'm in a pageant and when I'm not," Butler said. "I'm not going to act differently, but that's a big stereotype. People think you're not the same person."

Many of the stereotypes of pageant girls as fake ditzes who only care about a crown and sash are perpetuated in movies and TV shows that fictionalize the true pageant experience, according to Priebe. She said the ideas that media projects can be frustrating for real pageant contestants to deal with and confront.

"It's not 'Miss Congeniality,'" Priebe said, referring to a comedy movie franchise that focuses on the often-vapid antics of contestants in a fictional beauty pageant. "We're educated women who are driven to get scholarship money and have careers and live their lives to their full potential. ... [Most contestants] don't fall into any stereotype, so just get to know somebody before you make assumptions."

The best way these women said people can shake off media's stereotypes and get to know what pageant contestants are really like is to attend a pageant in person. National competitions like Miss America and Miss USA aren't the only beauty pageants that exist, and their televised broadcasts aren't the only way people can see these contests. Local and state-level pageants are happening around the country nearly every weekend, giving audiences the chance to see what goes into pageants before television and production magic take over. That's what Anagnos said she'd like to more people to see.

“I think if people would actually attend a local pageant they’d get a better understanding of the national pageant,” Anagnos said. “When you’ve got a national pageant, you’ve got ads and you’ve got TV breaks, and you can’t really get it. I’d rather people would just – instead of knocking it before they try it – just go out and experience it.”

According to Anagnos, local pageants tend to give audiences more information on the various elements of the competition and how judging is conducted. For instance, she said they often explain and emphasize the importance of the interview portion and contestants’ platforms and community service, while these elements are often passed over quickly in televised broadcasts.

She said audience members who attend pageants also learn more about the contestants as individuals. In on-stage introductions, the contestants briefly tell the audience and the judges who they are, where they go to school and what they are studying. They also describe their platforms and their academic or professional goals. Anagnos said live audiences get to see every single contestant compete in every element of competition, not just the top 10 or 15, which can help audiences recognize and relate to the women as real people, not just as pretty figures on a screen for a few seconds.

Inside Experience

In February 2014, I decided to see what pageants are really like from the inside by competing in the Miss Ball State University pageant. That one night of competition took months of preparation: finding and practicing my talent – singing – building my resume of volunteer work and platform advocacy, staying constantly up to date on current events, forming developed, informed opinions, and even practicing walking gracefully in sky-high heels. This intense preparation meant I could defend my opinions with facts and examples and that I was confident to step on-stage for every aspect of the competition.

In developing my platform, I chose an organization that I was passionate about, Heifer International (<http://www.heifer.org/>), and I took action to promote it, creating a fundraiser at my university to teach people about the group’s mission of creating sustainable pathways out of poverty through skills-education. And yes, I did go shopping for a gown and swimsuit, stomp back and forth in my small apartment in those 5-inch heels, and teach myself how to apply eyeliner and false eyelashes symmetrically – but the physical, external work made up a small portion of the time I spent preparing.

The contestants I encountered backstage were nothing like the air-headed blondes or screaming divas of reality TV and fiction. Instead of backstabbing, ruthless competitors, I found compassionate women who were willing to help each other with anything from a broken zipper to an emotional meltdown. The positive energy that buzzed backstage was nothing like the vitriolic air of competition I expected. While plenty of time was spent curling hair, applying makeup and adjusting garments, more women were spending their downtime backstage doing homework, reading the news, munching on snacks or even taking naps. The contestants were not plastic airheads fighting for a crown. They were real

women who channeled their love of performing and their passion for a cause into competition to earn scholarships for the education that could propel them into careers.

While my experiences changed my own perceptions and stereotypes about pageant contestants, the work that goes into competition and the motivations for competing, arguments against pageants still remain. Although all pageants in the Miss America Organization include an intense and nerve-wracking private interview that tests the contestants' knowledge of social, political and cultural issues as well as their ability to communicate well under pressure, those interviews don't make it to TV. What most audiences see is all the glitz and glamour, the bikinis and gowns that seem to define womanhood as being pretty and nothing more.

The reality of competing in a beauty pageant can be an inspirational experience that teaches women invaluable career and personal skills and funds educational opportunities, but the presence of pageants in the media nonetheless remains narrow and potentially negative. Televised broadcasts of pageants focus on the contestants' outfits and physiques, while academic achievements and aspirations are often mentioned only in passing alongside fun facts about strange hobbies or favorite animals. There seems to be a disconnect between pageants in media and pageants in real life, and this is where debate about whether the harm of beauty pageants outweighs the good arises.

Most beauty pageants are scholarship competitions that emphasize community service and intellectual achievement, rewarding winners with money to fund further education, but that purpose is often clouded by the pageant's apparent desire to promote a narrow, unrealistic version of ideal womanhood. The realities of competition that are apparent before the competition and behind the scenes – the hours of community service, weeks of preparation, and passionate, intelligent competitors – don't have the glitz and glam appeal of the onstage action. In the televised broadcasts that most people see, these positive elements of pageants go unseen while bikini bodies and expensive evening gowns get the glory and the attention, defining what beauty pageants are to most audiences. According to Bingham, this conflict is what creates the problem with pageants.

"Sometimes what something is defined as is not nearly as important as how it functions in society," Bingham said. "There's nothing wrong with actually participating in a beauty pageant, [but] what it stands for is questionable."

Anagnos and Priebe suggested that pageants themselves aren't the issue so much as the way they are presented. They agreed that if audiences saw more of the interview process and less of the contestant's beach bodies, or that if broadcasts focused more on academic and career achievements than on quirky fun facts, beliefs about beauty pageants and contestants might change.

While it is true that the Miss America pageant started as nothing more than entertainment, things have changed over the past nine decades. The bathing beauty competition of the 1920s has been replaced by a system in which motivated, intelligent women vie for the opportunity to promote an issue they are passionate about and receive

scholarships to fund their education. Bikinis and rhinestones are still part of the competition, but for the women involved in beauty pageant competitions, these superficial elements play a smaller role than the scholarships, community service, social platforms and personal growth pageants offer.

It can be easy to criticize something that doesn't seem real, and the highly-produced and fictionalized media that currently presents beauty pageants doesn't seem real at all. Butler said she'd like to see television broadcasts of pageants that focus on just how normal most pageant contestants are, and how driven and hardworking they must be to compete in these pageants.

This fall, in the dusk of a mid-September evening, a tradition will begin again. In Atlantic City, 52 young women will prepare for competition, and I will heat up pizza rolls and scoop ice cream.

But this time I will watch differently. I won't mock any contestant's stumbled answer to her onstage questions. Instead, I'll sympathize with the pressure of having only a few seconds to develop, frame and express an opinion on a highly charged political issue. I won't roll my eyes in the swimwear competition; I'll consider and notice with respect how much time and work the contestants put into getting fit and staying healthy. And when the next Miss America is crowned in a swirl of tears and roses, I will understand her overwhelming joy, knowing that there's more to a beauty queen than a crown and a sash.

“Beautiful: Stories and Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture”

In developing this project, I conducted an exploratory study involving a survey of Ball State students regarding their beliefs, perceptions and stereotypes about beauty pageants and pageant contestants. In addition to using survey responses to inform the creation of the website content, I also wrote an academic article discussing the data. The content of this article is available for online audiences to download through the website’s “About” page (<http://sdreibelbis7.wix.com/beautiful#!about/c1kcz>). The full text of the article is on the following pages.

Beautiful: Stories & Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Society

Sara Dreibelbis, Ball State University Senior Honors Thesis, May 2014

Abstract

Beauty pageants have been part of American media and culture for nearly the past century, inspiring live television broadcasts, reality TV shows and fictional movies. Exposure to this media, which is often dramatized or fictionalized, rather than to actual, live beauty pageants might lead to the creation of common perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes regarding beauty pageants and pageant contestants that are not reflective of the true experiences and reality of pageants for participants.

The aim of this exploratory study is to investigate whether such stereotypes might exist, what they might be, and especially how perceptions of pageants and pageant contestants might vary between those who have personally participated in them and those who have not. The primary hypothesis of this study is that individuals who have not participated in beauty pageants will have an overall more negative perception of them than those who have been involved first-hand.

The study was conducted with an online survey. The survey was distributed to undergraduate and graduate students at a midsize Midwestern university. Students who were U.S. citizens and were between the ages of 18 to 24 were eligible to participate in the survey. The survey included questions regarding demographic information, experience with and exposure to pageants, and beliefs and perceptions about beauty pageants and contestants in general.

Results from the survey did show several distinct differences in perceptions of and beliefs about beauty pageants between respondents who had participated in them and those who had not. These differences primarily deal with beliefs regarding contestants' motivations to enter pageants, important judging criteria for beauty pageants, and descriptions of beauty pageants and pageant contestants. In general, responses from those who had never participated in a pageant tended to describe them more negatively and to indicate a belief that external and physical factors are major motivators and judging criteria for pageants.

From these findings it can be inferred that in general, those who have not participated in beauty pageants have more negative perceptions of and beliefs about both beauty pageants and pageant contestants than those who have participated in them. This conclusion supports the original hypothesis.

Literature Review

Beauty pageants are a national and international phenomenon that has drawn both media attention and academic review. Although many academic works exist that focus on the purposes and effects of beauty pageants in a variety of cultures and specific contexts, there is little academic discussion of the perceptions that people who have not been involved in pageants first-hand might have about beauty pageants and contestants as compared to the perceptions and experiences of pageant participants and contestants, which is the topic this exploratory study aims to investigate. Previous academic works on beauty pageants cover a variety of topics that do not touch on this study's specific focus.

Global Cultures

A common theme for academic discussion is the role that beauty pageants play within specific regions, countries and communities. Works exploring the cultural ideals represented by beauty pageants in specific nations outside the U.S. tend to explore the political and social factors that may affect the qualities expected of pageant winners and women in general (Balogun, Schackt, Crawford et. al., Billings). Balogun examined two distinct Nigerian beauty pageants, one of which focused on a cultural-nationalist ideal that emphasized traditional Nigerian womanhood, while the other valued international standards of beauty and femininity. Balogun arrived at the conclusion that in Nigeria specifically, two distinct and potentially conflicting gendered national identities exist. A similar study reviewed the cultural ideals set forth in Mayan beauty pageants, where again a conflict between traditional values of Mayan womanhood and more international and political gender identities appeared to create tension in the competition (Schackt).

Within the topic of national identity, several studies examine the role that pageants play in countries that are actively developing. Such studies have again been specific to

regions outside of the U.S. Crawford (et. al.) studied the opinions of Nepali women on the introduction of pageants to their culture and concluded that pageants may create conflict and ambivalence among them, as beauty pageants can present opportunity and empowerment for women in the nation, but can also lead to body image issues and further the objectification of women in developing areas. Billings' study of Tanzanian pageants focused on the contestants' linguistic posturing, observing that contestants who used English in competition were more likely to succeed than their non-English speaking counterparts, even if the English was obviously memorized and structurally incorrect. Billings' observations led her to suggest the need for further investigation into the practices and expectations for language use and posturing in multilingual countries.

While such works bring up interesting areas of study related to the various roles and effects of beauty pageants in specific countries, they do not provide insight into broad perceptions and potential stereotypes of beauty pageants and contestants within modern American culture, nor do they attempt to compare such perceptions with the experiences and perceptions of pageant participants.

Race Issues

A large body of academic work concerning beauty pageants in American culture focuses specifically on the role that race plays in beauty pageants. The common focus of these pieces is the conflict between a unique black identity and assimilation toward typically white feminine ideals ("Bodies of Difference" Banet-Weiser, "The Representation..." Banet-Weiser, Early, Kinloch). Banet-Weiser offered a historical analysis of diversity in the Miss America pageant, documenting the reigns of the first black Miss America, Vanessa Williams, the first Jewish Miss America, Bess Myerson, and the first Miss America with a physical handicap, Heather Whitestone. She argued that although all of these women did represent diverse communities within America, they were each nonetheless expected to conform to traditional ideals both in behavior and in appearance, and to assimilate to the typical image of a Miss America titleholder, mitigating the aspects that made them diverse. Banet-Weiser also discussed, though, how this pressure to assimilate to traditional standards has decreased over time, allowing titleholders to express some elements of their diversity.

Others have argued that non-white pageant contestants should defy expectations to assimilate to the traditional ideal presented by most Miss America titleholders. In his essay on the topic, Early argued that any black woman who enters the Miss America pageant and attempts to fit into the ideals it represents is not revolutionary, but is instead taking a step backward in the promotion of diversity and inclusion for African Americans. Kinloch argued that black women who do compete in beauty pageants should not try to assimilate to the standards applied to white contestants, but should instead accept and celebrate the qualities that make them diverse. These works discuss societal perceptions of race's role in beauty pageants and of the role of beauty pageants in defining race-specific standards, but they again do not discuss broad perceptions of pageantry or offer comparison between outside perceptions of pageants and those of pageant participants.

Child Pageants

Several academic works discuss children's pageants specifically, examining the potential effects of these competitions on both parents and children (Cartwright, Lieberman). Cartwright's examination of child beauty pageants aimed to determine whether their representation in reality television was an accurate depiction of the attitudes and behaviors of child pageant contestants and their families. She argued that such reality shows focus primarily on the negative aspects of these competitions, however she did suggest that parents who encourage their children to compete in these pageants may experience "achievement by proxy," vicariously attributing their children's successes to their own lives. Meanwhile, Lieberman's study into the potential effects of child pageants, both positive and negative, compared a child's role as a pageant contestant to that of a child model or actor. Lieberman argued that due to the similarities between these fields, regulations should be instated to protect child pageant contestants just as regulations exist to protect other child performers. These works do not discuss pageants among adult contestants, and they are narrowly tailored to address issues with the parent-child dynamic and child safety in pageants.

Cultural and Historic Context

Several academic works regarding beauty pageants have discussed pageantry's unique role in national and international culture and morale over time ("International Spectacles..." Banet-Weiser, Hamlin, Lantham, Schofield). Banet-Weiser discussed the role of international pageants in the global political order, arguing that they provide nations with the opportunity to promote and publicize their country's ideals as well as recreational and tourist attractions. She also argued that such pageants tend to create a globalized set of standards for ideal femininity, which are often based on Western notions of gender norms and beauty.

Other works discuss how pageants correlate to their social, historical and political surroundings. When the Miss America pageant was first created, it was a vehicle to promote and reward traditional feminine ideals in reaction to the flapper culture of the 1920s (Hamlin). Over the next few decades, trends in the Miss America pageant paralleled the conflicts and changes in expectations, freedoms and censorship of women's appearances and women's rights (Lantham). During World War II, beauty pageants promoted the idea of women as symbols of American pride, strength and support, similar to the Rosie the Riveter campaign and the USO. Such social movements recognized and even encouraged women's changing role in society, specifically joining the work force and supporting the war effort, while still emphasizing and reinforcing traditional feminine qualities (Schofield). Each of these pieces discusses American beauty pageants in a historical context, but they do not explore notions about pageants in modern America.

Politics

Several journalistic pieces have discussed the frequency with which pageant contestants go on to pursue political ambitions ("Here She Comes" Levey Friedman, Woolf). They have found that changes in the Miss America pageant, which are intended to place increased emphasis on public speaking, community service and the promotion of a personal platform, have attracted more contestants with political ambitions. They suggested that the Miss America Organization's reinvention to become more relevant has made it an ideal training ground for women who hope to go on to political campaigns, as both pageants and politics require media savvy, community service, public speaking skills,

travelling and attending publicity events, promoting a specific idea or platform, and maintaining a personal image. Again, none of these works offer insight into the topic that this study aims to explore.

Current Perceptions and Beliefs

While most literature about pageants emphasizes specific aspects that are unrelated to the topic of this exploratory study, one work does discuss how perceptions and beliefs about beauty pageants may differ between participants and non-participants (Ruwe). In this academic article that places pageants among “kitsch” media in American culture, Ruwe includes a reflection on her own experiences competing in a beauty pageant and how the reality of those experiences differed from the perceptions, stereotypes and beliefs she held before competing, as well as those that media and pageant non-participants seemed to emphasize. She argued that there might be a distinct contrast between the broad societal perceptions and beliefs that people who have never participated in beauty pageants tend to hold about them and the realities of competition as she and other contestants experienced them. Such a distinction would indicate that inconsistencies might exist between perceptions and beliefs about pageants from those who do not have first-hand experience in them and the beliefs of those who do.

Several academic articles and journalistic pieces have discussed a variety of stereotypes and beliefs regarding beauty pageants and contestants. These works draw from both expectations set by the structure of pageant competitions and from the expectations that fans and critics of pageants often hold. Works discussing the physical appearance of pageant contestants described expectations that contestants are unrealistically thin and tall, often without any unique or distinguishing features (“Here She Is...” Levey Friedman, Zipp & Teicher). Other works discussed common beliefs about contestants’ personalities and motivations to compete, such as expectations that they are vain, selfish or vapid (“A Certain Class of Girl” Banet-Weiser, “Anatomy of a Beauty Pageant” Banet-Weiser, “If You Were a Color...” Banet-Weiser). Such works were instrumental in defining potential stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions that might exist about beauty pageants and pageant contestants on a variety of levels, and were used when

creating survey questions in which respondents described pageant contestants or their motivations to compete.

Methods

This study employed an online survey to determine the perceptions, beliefs and potential stereotypes that individuals might have regarding beauty pageants and pageant contestants. The survey was sent to undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-size public Midwestern university who had agreed to receive emails regarding academic survey participation. The survey included 40 questions that addressed:

- Demographic information of respondents.
- Respondents' involvement in beauty pageants, through personal participation in a beauty pageant or the participation of a friend, family member or close acquaintance. If respondents reported experience with pageants in either of these ways, they were further questioned on the details of their involvement, such as what role(s) they played in the pageant(s).
- Respondents' perceptions of beauty pageants and pageant contestants, specifically concerning motivations to enter beauty pageants, judging criteria in beauty pageants, and descriptions of pageants and contestants.
- Respondents' familiarity with and exposure to pageants and media involving pageants, including experience in the audience of a live pageant or with pageant-related media such as fiction and nonfiction movies and television shows, and live or recorded televised broadcasts of pageants.
- Respondents' beliefs regarding how beauty pageants, contestants and winners might impact societal expectations of women in terms of appearance, behavior, or in any other way.
- For female respondents, whether they would ever participate in a beauty pageant and why or why not.

When specific adjectives, phrases, ideas or examples were given for respondents to select or rank, these factors were drawn from previous literature on beauty pageants, as described above ("A Certain Class of Girl" Banet-Weiser, "Anatomy of a Beauty Pageant"

Banet-Weiser, "If You Were a Color..." Banet-Weiser), or from regulations and information from the official website of the Miss America Organization.

Questions that addressed a respondent's personal, first-hand participation in beauty pageants were specifically instrumental in furthering the purpose of this study because they allowed for comparison and contrast between responses from non-participants and participants to identical questions. As one main goal of this study is to explore potential commonalities and differences in perceptions, stereotypes and beliefs about beauty pageants and pageant contestants between those who have and have not participated in them, the ability to view responses as a whole or grouped by respondents' indication of participation in beauty pageants made such comparison simpler. This comparison is also the reason that all respondents were asked identical questions regarding their perceptions, stereotypes and beliefs regardless of their indication of participation in pageants.

The survey was distributed to undergraduate and graduate students at a midsize Midwestern university during November 2014. All respondents were U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 24. This age range was chosen as a requirement for participation because it is the age range in which all contestants in the Miss America Organization's beauty pageant competitions must fall.

Results

Of the survey's 145 respondents, all U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 24, 122 respondents indicated that they had never participated in a beauty pageant, while 23 respondents indicated that they had personally participated in at least one. Due to the ratio of respondents who had not participated to those who had, data from the respondent group as a whole is skewed toward the responses of those who had not participated in pageants. For this reason, it is essential to separate responses from those who had and had not participated in pageants in order to perform a clearer comparison and contrast between the two groups. The 122 respondents who indicated that they had not participated in a beauty pageant in any way (as a contestant, judge, event organizer, backstage volunteer or other capacity) will be referred to in this study as the NO subgroup,

while the 23 respondents who indicated that they had participated in a pageant in one of the above ways will be referred to as the YES subgroup.

The majority of survey respondents were female, with women making up 80% of the total respondents. This gender differential was reflected in both the NO subgroup, with 79% female respondents, and the YES subgroup, with 84% female respondents. A potential reason for this high proportion of female respondents could be the survey's subject matter of beauty pageants. Because all pageant contestants are women, males may have been less likely to take the survey if they did not feel that they were familiar with beauty pageants or if they viewed beauty pageants as a primarily feminine issue.

The majority of respondents in the YES subgroup, those who indicated participation in at least one pageant, had participated as a contestant. Of respondents in the YES subgroup, 75% participated as a contestant, 21% as a backstage helper, 21% as a volunteer, 14% as a judge, 14% as an event organizer. Several respondents indicated participation in multiple roles.

Respondents in the NO subgroup had less experience with actual pageants in general, either through the participation of friends, family members and acquaintances or through personally attending a beauty pageant, than those in the YES subgroup. Of respondents in the NO subgroup, fewer than half (44%) said they had ever had a friend, family member or close acquaintance be involved in a pageant in any way. This minority is compared to a majority of 68% of respondents in the YES subgroup who had a friend, family member or close acquaintance who had participated in a pageant. When questioned about whether they had ever attended a beauty pageant as an audience member, a minority of 24% of respondents in the NO subgroup indicated that they had been an audience member at a pageant, while a majority of 60% of respondents in the YES subgroup indicated that they had.

Responses from the NO subgroup indicated that NO subgroup respondents tended to have seen more secondary media portrayals of pageants than actual, live pageants. Of NO subgroup respondents, 63% said they had seen at least one fictionalized movie about beauty pageants, 55% had seen a television broadcast of a national or international beauty pageant (like Miss America, Miss USA or Miss Universe), and 41% had seen reality television shows about beauty pageants. These numbers are compared with less than a

quarter of NO subgroup respondents who indicated that they'd ever attended an actual pageant as an audience member.

Describing Pageant Contestants

One survey question asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with how well they believed certain adjectives and statements described beauty pageant contestants. Respondents were asked to rank 40 one- to two-word descriptors on a 5-point Likert scale, from "Strongly Disagree" (numeric value 1) to "Strongly Agree" (numeric value 5). For each of the 40 descriptors that respondents were asked to rank, the average numeric value corresponding to respondents' indicated levels of agreement was taken in order to easily rank the descriptors in terms of most- and least-agreed with. (E.g. A descriptor with a mean numeric value closer to 5 is one with which more responses tended to agree or strongly agree; one with a mean value near 3 is one on which responses tended to be more neutral; one with a mean value near 1 is one with which responses tended to disagree or strongly disagree.) Descriptors were then ranked in order of highest mean value (#1, most agreed) to lowest mean value (#40, least agreed). The responses from the two subgroups were interpreted separately in order to facilitate comparison.

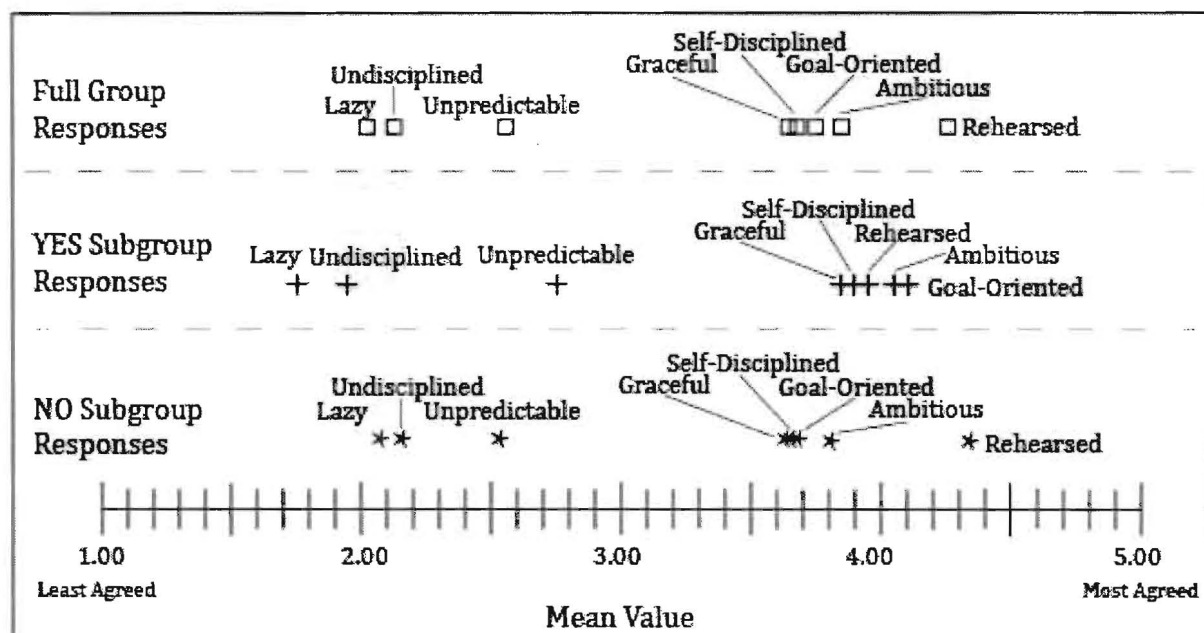
According to mean values, several words fell into the 10 most agreed descriptors for both subgroups ("Ambitious," "Graceful," "Goal-Oriented," "Rehearsed" and "Self-Disciplined"), and several words fell into the 10 least agreed descriptors for both subgroups ("Lazy," "Undisciplined" and "Unpredictable").

The following plot shows a comparison in the mean values between subgroups for these common terms. Words that fall farther on the left side of the plot (mean < 3.00) are those with which respondents tended to disagree more consistently or more strongly, while words that fall farther on the right side of the plot (mean > 3.00) are those with which respondents tended to agree more consistently or more strongly. Despite the fact that there was some consensus between both subgroups on these terms, the level of agreement or disagreement varies between respondents in the YES and NO subgroups. For instance, although the term "Lazy" had the lowest mean (most disagreed) in both subgroups and in the full respondent group, responses from the YES subgroup showed

stronger disagreement with this term: the YES subgroup mean for “Lazy” is 1.76, while the NO subgroup mean is 2.07.

Table 1.1 – Mean Values, Most Agreed and Least Agreed Descriptors

“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: Beauty pageant contestants...”



(Full Group: n = 185, YES Subgroup: n = 23, NO Subgroup: n = 122)

One should note that the above plot excludes the descriptor “sexualized,” which ranked #2 most agreed in the full respondent group with a mean of 4.03. The plot in Table 1.1 includes only those terms that were in both subgroups’ top 10 most agreed terms or in both subgroups’ top 10 least agreed terms. The term “sexualized” is a special case because it fell into the NO subgroup’s top 10 most agreed, with a subgroup mean value of 4.15 and ranking of #2 most agreed, but it did not fall into the top 10 most agreed descriptors of the YES subgroup. Among responses from the YES subgroup, it had a mean value of 3.48 and a ranking of #11. This finding might indicate that respondents who have never participated in a pageant perceive more sexualization of pageant contestants than respondents who have participated in pageants.

While the two subgroups apparently concur on how well the above terms do or do not describe pageant contestants, there are points of disagreement. All of the descriptors with which responses from the NO subgroup were more likely to agree and with which responses from the YES subgroup were more likely to disagree are words or phrases that are commonly interpreted as negative or as having a negative connotation. Conversely, all of the descriptors with which responses from the YES subgroup were more likely to agree and with which responses the NO subgroup were more likely to disagree are words or phrases that are commonly interpreted as positive or as having a positive connotation.

Overall, more responses in the NO subgroup indicated that these respondents, those who had never participated in a beauty pageant, agreed more than disagreed with negative words and phrases and disagreed more than agreed with positive words and phrases describing pageant contestants. Among NO subgroup responses, respondents agreed more than disagreed (mean > 3) with 13 descriptors with negative connotations, including the terms "Vain," "Frivolous" and "Fake," and with eight descriptors with a positive connotation, including "Goal-Oriented" and "Graceful." Also in the NO subgroup, respondents disagreed more than agreed (mean <3) with 16 descriptors with positive connotations, including "Generous," "Intelligent" and "Honest," and only two descriptors with positive connotations: "Lazy" and "Undisciplined".

Conversely, responses from the YES subgroup tended to indicate more agreement with positive words and phrases and more disagreement with negative words and phrases describing pageant contestants. According to mean values, responses from the YES subgroup agreed more than disagreed (mean > 3) with 20 descriptors with positive connotations, including "Educated," "Philanthropic" and "Well-Spoken," and four descriptors with negative connotations, including "Predictable" and "Frivolous". Respondents in the YES subgroup disagreed more than agreed (mean < 3) with 12 descriptors with negative connotations, including "Ditzy," "Selfish" and "Egotistical," and only four descriptors with positive connotations, including "Realistic" and "Relatable".

Perceived Motivators to Compete

Respondents were also asked to indicate why they think contestants compete in beauty pageants. In this question, respondents were given a list of options, from which they could choose as many as they believed were motivators.

Respondents in both the YES and NO subgroups chose the option, “To win scholarship money to apply toward future education” more than any other option (78% of NO subgroup respondents, 90% of YES subgroup respondents). In the NO subgroup, another option was also chosen by 78% of respondents, tying for #1 ranking: “For fun.” This option ranked #2 among respondents in the YES subgroup, with 85% of respondents choosing it as a motivating factor.

Despite this consensus on the top two options, the groups’ responses on other motivators indicate differences in perceived reasons for competing in beauty pageants.

Respondents in the NO subgroup were more likely to choose material and external factors as motivators than respondents in the YES subgroup. There were several options that respondents in the NO subgroup were more likely to choose as motivators for entering pageants than respondents in the YES subgroup. These are, in order of absolute value difference in proportion between the two subgroups from most to least:

Table 2.1 – Motivators preferred by the NO subgroup

“Why do you think contestants compete in beauty pageants? Please check all that apply.”

Option	NO subgroup: (n=122)	YES subgroup: (n=23)	Difference (% points)
To become famous	60%	40%	20
To appeal to men	42%	25%	17
To launch a performance career	66%	50%	16
To make connections with influential people	60%	55%	5

There were also several options that respondents in the YES subgroup were more likely to choose as motivators for entering pageants than those in the NO subgroup. These factors tended to be related to self-improvement and personal factors. The most

pronounced differences in these are, in order of absolute value difference in proportion between the two subgroups from most to least:

Table 2.2 – Motivators preferred by the YES subgroup

“Why do you think contestants compete in beauty pageants? Please check all that apply.”

Option	NO subgroup: (n=122)	YES subgroup: (n=23)	Difference (% points)
To improve public speaking skills	29%	70%	41
To support a social cause they care about	34%	70%	36
To pursue a career in politics	6%	35%	19
To improve self-confidence	55%	70%	15
To volunteer in general community service	10%	25%	15

Perceived Judging Criteria

Respondents were also asked to rank a list of judging criteria in order of importance according to how they believed most beauty pageants are judged (not on their own opinion of how pageants should be judged). Respondents did this by rearranging the judging criteria descriptions and placing them into a new order, with what they perceived to be the most important criterion at the top of the ordered list (Position 1) and least important at the bottom (Position 9).

Below is a comparison of the proportions of the two subgroups that placed certain criteria in Position 1 (most important). Criteria are listed in order of the absolute value difference in percentage points of the proportion of respondents who placed that criterion in Position 1, from greatest difference to least, showing the four criteria with the greatest differences between subgroups.

Table 3.1 – Perceived importance of judging criteria by subgroup

“Please rank the following judging criteria in order of importance according to the way you think most beauty pageants are judged, with 1 being most important and 10 being least important. Please remember to rank these criteria based on how you think actual pageants are judged, not how you think they should be judged or how you would judge them.”

Judging Criterion	Proportion of NO subgroup respondents placing criterion as #1, most important (n=122)	Proportion of YES subgroup respondents placing criterion as #1, most important (n=23)	Absolute value diff. (% points)
Physical attractiveness	43%	14%	29
Fitting into the traditional image of a “beauty queen”	26%	0%	26
Confidence, poise and stage presence	27%	52%	25
Strength as a potential advocate for social causes	1%	19%	18

It is also important to note that some criteria that might not have been frequently placed in Position 1 (most important) were frequently placed in Positions 2 or 3, indicating that respondents still perceive them as important. For responses from the NO subgroup, the criterion that was placed in Position 1 (most important) most frequently was “Physical attractiveness,” the criterion that was placed in Position 2 most frequently was “Fitting into the traditional image of a ‘beauty queen’,” and the criterion that was placed in Position 3 most frequently was “Confidence, poise and stage presence.” The criterion placed in Position 9 (least important) most frequently by respondents in the NO subgroup was “Knowledge of current social and political events.”

For responses from the YES subgroup, the criterion that was placed in Position 1 most frequently was “Confidence, poise and stage presence,” the criterion that was placed in Position 2 most frequently was “Ability to express ideas and opinions clearly,” and the criterion placed in Position 3 most frequently was “Physical attractiveness.” The criterion

placed in Position 9 most frequently by respondents in the YES subgroup was “Fitting into the traditional image of a ‘beauty queen’.”

Self-Described Opinions of Beauty Pageants & Pageant Contestants

A pair of questions in this study asked respondents to describe their own opinions of beauty pageants or of beauty pageant contestants, respectively, in one word. During analysis, words were grouped into several categories based on common connotations and interpretations in order to determine the attitudes that might be connected with such words. It is important to note that a few responses in the NO subgroup were incomplete, comprising only a few letters or a space. This data was not included in the following tables and analysis, although the respondents were still included in the total number of respondents, as they responded fully to other, further questions and are therefore still considered part of the NO subgroup.

The first of these two questions dealt with respondents’ descriptions of beauty pageants in general. Several words were repeated multiple times by different respondents. For the NO subgroup, the most common words were: “unnecessary” (8 occurrences), “pointless” (4 occurrences), “over-rated” (3 occurrences) and “sexist” (3 occurrences). Due to the small size of the YES subgroup (23 respondents), there was not as much incidence of word repetition. The only word repeated more than once in the YES subgroup was “Okay,” which occurred twice.

The second of these two questions that asked respondents to write in a one-word description of beauty pageant contestants. Again, repetition of certain words did occur, especially among the larger NO subgroup. Specific words that appeared more than once in the NO subgroup’s responses were: “beautiful” and “confident” (4 occurrences each); “fake,” “naïve” and “vain” (3 occurrences each); “competitive,” “misguided,” “people,” “self-absorbed,” “self-involved,” “showy” and “vapid” (2 occurrences each). The small size of the YES subgroup resulted in no repetition of words. For this reason, connotation category comparisons can provide a clearer comparison of the types of words respondents in each subgroup were likely to use.

Table 4.1 – Connotations of one-word descriptions of beauty pageants (left columns) AND of beauty pageant contestants (right columns)

“Describe your own opinion of beauty pageants in one word.” AND “Describe your own opinion of beauty pageant contestants in one word.”

Connotation	Beauty pageants – NO subgroup (n=122)	Beauty pageants – YES subgroup (n=23)	Pageant contestants - NO subgroup (n=122)	Pageant contestants - YES subgroup (n=23)
Negative connotation implying futility, pointlessness or outdatedness	35 occurrences (38.04%)	1 occurrence (5%)	2 occurrences (2.22%)	0 occurrences
Negative connotation implying egotism or vanity	11 occurrences (11.96%)	2 occurrences (10%)	18 occurrences (20%)	2 occurrences (10%)
Negative connotation implying sexism	9 occurrences (9.78%)	1 occurrence (5%)	2 occurrences (2.22%)	0 occurrences
Negative connotation implying ignorance, naiveté or causing unintentional harm	2 occurrences (2.17%)	0 occurrences	19 occurrences (21.11%)	2 occurrences (10%)
General negative connotation	16 occurrences (17.39%)	1 occurrence (5%)	9 occurrences (10%)	0 occurrences
Positive connotation implying hard work and dedication	1 occurrence (1.09%)	1 occurrence (5%)	8 occurrences (8.89%)	8 occurrences (40%)
General positive connotation	7 occurrences (7.61%)	8 occurrences (40%)	16 occurrences (17.78%)	6 occurrences (30%)
Neutral	8 occurrences (8.70%)	6 occurrences (30%)	13 occurrences (14.44%)	2 occurrences (10%)

When comparing how respondents described beauty pageants in general with how they compared beauty pageant contestants, several notable differences arise. First, although respondents in the NO subgroup were more likely to describe both beauty pageants and pageant contestants with more negative than positive words, they used fewer negative words to describe beauty pageant contestants (55.56% of words) than to describe beauty pageants in general (79.34% of words). Along the same point, respondents in the NO subgroup also used more positive words to describe beauty pageant contestants (26.67%) than beauty pageants in general (8.70%). In fact, the incidence of positive words among respondents in the NO subgroup more than tripled when describing beauty pageant contestants rather than beauty pageants in general. A similar trend appears in responses from the YES subgroup, in which the incidence of positive words nearly doubled from 40%

of words used to describe beauty pageants in general to 70% of words used to describe beauty pageant contestants.

Discussion/Conclusion

Two consistent and notable differences between respondents who had personally participated in at least one beauty pageant and those who had not arose in this exploratory study, suggesting that there might be differences in how pageant participants and non-participants view beauty pageants.

One notable difference is in perceived motivation to enter pageants. A majority of respondents in the NO subgroup, those who have never participated in a beauty pageant, indicated a belief that external, material and physical factors both motivate contestants to compete in beauty pageants and play a major role in the judging of beauty pageants, while a majority of respondents in the YES subgroup, those who had participated in at least one pageant, indicated a belief that personal and professional qualities rather than physical or material factors were primary motivators and judging criteria.

These findings suggest that individuals who have not participated in pageants and whose primary exposure to beauty pageants is through media rather than personal experience have only seen evidence of material, external and physical judging criteria, motivations and rewards, while the experiences of individuals who have participated in pageants likely involve more personal and professional motivators, rewards and judging criteria. If this is the case, then there may be a “gap” or “hole” in media representation of pageants, due to a focus on the external and physical aspects of beauty pageants and not on the personal intentions and traits of contestants or potential personal rewards. If pageant contestants, directors or organizers seek a reconciliation of this difference, they might encourage changes in media coverage of beauty pageants, focusing not on glamorizing or sensationalizing the competitions and their contestants, but on the behind-the-scenes elements of beauty pageants, the full process of the competition, and the actual personalities, motivations and experiences of contestants.

The second notable difference between pageant participants and non-participants is in perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants. The majority of responses from respondents in the NO subgroup, those who had never participated in a pageant, indicated

that they viewed pageants in general as negative. Responses from the NO subgroup also favored negative terms in describing pageant contestants, while the majority of responses from the YES subgroup, respondents who had participated in at least one pageant, described pageants in neutral or positive terms and favored positive descriptors of pageant contestants.

Although NO subgroup respondents overall used more negative terms to describe pageants in general than to describe beauty pageant contestants, the majority of descriptions that NO subgroup respondents provided for contestants were still negative. While NO subgroup respondents described pageants most frequently as being outdated or pointless, words with this connotation hardly arose at all among respondents in the YES subgroup. This might indicate that respondents who had participated in pageants had experiences in those competitions that exposed them to purposes or positive impacts of pageants with which those who have not participated in pageants are not familiar. When describing beauty pageant contestants, NO subgroup respondents were most likely to describe them as naïve or ignorant, while YES subgroup respondents were more likely to use descriptions involving determination and hard work. This might be due also to a difference in level of familiarity with pageant competitions, as individuals who have participated in pageants might be more aware of the competitions' structure and necessary preparation, while those who have never participated in a pageant might be accustomed to fictionalized media, reality television, or highly-produced television broadcasts of beauty pageants.

The aim of this study was to determine what stereotypes, perceptions and beliefs about pageants might exist in modern American culture, and how those perceptions might vary between individuals who have and have not personally participated in a beauty pageant. Results have shown that there are several differences in how pageant participants and non-participants view beauty pageants and contestants. These differences are primarily focused on contestants' motivations for entering pageants, the importance of various factors in the judging of beauty pageants, and overall beliefs about beauty pageants and beauty pageant contestants.

Entering this exploratory study, the main hypothesis was that those who have never participated in beauty pageants would have overall more negative beliefs and perceptions

about them than those who have participated in at least one pageant. The results of the study support that hypothesis, showing that respondents who had never participated in a pageant were more likely to describe beauty pageants and pageant contestants negatively than respondents who had participated in at least one pageant, who were more likely to describe them positively.

Limitations/Implications for Further Research

This study was a small-scale, exploratory study with a limited number of survey respondents. The selection of survey respondents from students from one midsize Midwestern university limited respondents to a specific region of the United States, where certain perceptions and beliefs may be more prevalent. Respondents were also limited to an age range of 18 to 24. A future survey using respondents of more varied ages might yield different results. In order to get a true idea of perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes about pageants and contestants throughout the entire U.S., a broader survey representing diverse geographic areas and demographics would be necessary. This study is also limited in terms of the small number of respondents in the YES subgroup – those who had participated in at least one pageant. Results may vary greatly if further research samples a larger number of pageant participants.

One segment of this study that was especially limited by the small number of respondents involved several survey questions that gave respondents the opportunity to describe their opinions and beliefs in their own terms using full sentences. Although response rates to these questions were low, many of the responses showed that respondents in both groups did have strong opinions and beliefs about beauty pageants and pageant contestants, specifically concerning the effects of beauty pageants on modern American society and on pageant contestants themselves. Some notable examples are:

“Beauty pageants, contestants and winners affect society's expectations of women's behavior because the fact that beauty pageants still exist shows that women are still comfortable submitting themselves to physical judgment for something mislabeled as a ‘scholarship program.’” – NO subgroup respondent

“Any validity to the statement that these beauty pageants are ‘scholarship programs’ is belittled by the fact that all women in there [sic] pageants are required to participate in

the swimsuit competition where they are judged based on looks alone. Society's expectations for women are lowered because there are still plenty of people who do not see how degrading this is to anyone involved. There are many other ways to earn scholarships that do not involve showing the body in a pageant-approved bikini to millions of strangers in the audience and on live television. These pageants, no matter the argument, only set back any forward moving thoughts of feminism, that women and men are equal. Last I checked, there are no Mr. America pageants, labeled as 'scholarship programs' or otherwise, out there." – NO subgroup respondent

"I think they [pageants] can create both positive and negative expectations for society's view of women's appearances. In one sense they help girls see the importance of being well-rounded individuals who work hard and care for the community. On the other hand, the huge emphasis on looks can cause girls to feel they must look a certain way, which I think is wrong." – YES subgroup respondent

"I believe that beauty pageants give women a goal to strive for. Most winners are ambitious, driven, and believe in good causes. They are also intelligent and able to express themselves clearly. More women should strive to be like them." – YES subgroup respondent.

Despite the exploratory nature of this study and the above limitations, its results do support the initial hypothesis, indicating that future research into this topic might reveal more generalizable evidence of differences in perceptions of beauty pageants and contestants between pageant participants and non-participants. Further research into people's experience with and exposure to beauty pageants as well as their perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes about them could improve understanding of the differing beliefs about beauty pageants between those who have and have not been involved in them. This study examined a facet of beauty pageants about which there has been little research, and the results indicate there are differences in beliefs and perceptions regarding beauty pageants between those who have and have not participated in pageants.

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Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: October 28, 2014

TO: Sara Dreibelbis

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 676356-1

TITLE: Beautiful: Stories and Perceptions of Beauty Pageants in Modern American Culture

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

DECISION DATE: October 28, 2014

REVIEW TYPE: **EXEMPT**

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on October 28, 2014 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Exempt Categories:

	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
X	Category 2: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior
	Category 3: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
	Category 4: Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or

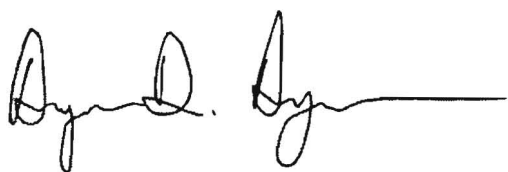
	if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
	Category 5: Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.
	Category 6: Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Editorial Notes:

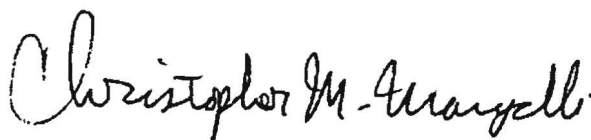
1. Approved- Exempt
2. Signature Required on Informed Consent

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.



Bryan Byers, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board



Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/Director
Office of Research Integrity

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